CONSIDERATIONS

ON

Church-Authority;

OCCASIONED BY

DR. BALGUY'S SERMON,

ON THAT SUBJECT;

Preached at LAMBETH CHAPEL,

And published by ORDER of the ARCHBISHOP.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. JESUS.

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BRITAN
NICVM

THE PREFACE.

HAVING lately met with what appeared to me a very extraordinary ſermon, written by Dr. Balguy, Archdeacon of Wincheſter, on the foundation of church-authority, I was thrown into a train of general reflections on the ſubject. Some of theſe I thought might be of uſe to illuſtrate the nature and tendency of *church-power*, for which the Doctor is a ſtrenuous advocate, and ſerve to undeceive thoſe, who might be liable to be miſled by ſuch reaſoning as he will meet with in this ſermon.

Theſe more general reflections, ſome of which reſpect principles of church-authority very different from thoſe of Dr. Balguy, I have compriſed in the four firſt ſections of theſe *Conſiderations*. The fifth and ſixth contain remarks on this writer's particular poſitions, and method of reaſoning.

Sorry I am to be under the neceſſity of troubling my reader with the repetition of any thing that has been ſaid before on this ſubject; but when the ſame arguments are urged again and again, it is impoſſible always to find new, or better anſwers. I flatter myſelf, however, that ſeveral of the obſervations in this treatiſe will appear to be new, at leaſt, that ſome things will appear to be ſet in a new or clearer point of light. But whenever the intereſts of truth and liberty are attacked, it is to be wiſhed that ſome would ſtand up in their defence, whether they acquit themſelves better than their predeceſſors in the ſame *good old cauſe*, or not. *New books* in defence of any principles whatever, will be read by many perſons, who will not look into *old books*, for the proper anſwers to them.

The Bangorian controverſy, I believe, contains many excellent things on this ſubject; but the ground of the argument being changed ſince that time, the peruſal of theſe pieces would be the leſs to our purpoſe at preſent. We who ſtand upon our defence, muſt follow the lead of our adverſaries. If they puſh in the common forms, we muſt make uſe of the effectual, though common and well-known mode of defence; but if our antagoniſt make uſe of any new *feint* of his own, we muſt have recourſe to a new method of defence, adapted to the occaſion.

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Conſiderable advantage cannot but accrue to the cauſe of religious, as well as civil liberty, from keeping the important ſubject continually in view. We are under great obligation, therefore, to all the advocates for church-authority, whenever they are pleaſed to write in its defence; whether it be in the old, hackneyed, but conſiſtent ſtrain, and pretend to derive their eccleſiaſtical power *jure divino*, from Chriſt and his apoſtles; or whether they go more aukwardly to work, and (as they have been obliged to do ſince the great cataſtrophe of their affairs in England) adopt a more moderate and humble ſtyle, being content to receive their divine authority *at ſecond hand* from the civil powers; whoſe divine ordination it, therefore, well behoves them to maintain.

Every attempt that has hitherto been made to ſhake, or undermine the foundations of the chriſtian faith, hath ended in the firmer eſtabliſhment of it. Alſo, every attempt to ſupport the unjuſt claims of churchmen over their fellow chriſtians, hath been equally impotent, and hath recoiled upon themſelves; and, I make no doubt, that this will be the iſſue of all the future efforts of intereſted or miſguided men, in ſo weak and unworthy a cauſe.

The freedom with which I have made the defence of my chriſtian liberty in theſe Conſiderations, is ſufficiently juſtified by the freedom with which it has been attacked by the Doctor in this conſecration-ſermon. The very moderate, meek, and chriſtian-minded reader may, perhaps, think there is too much *aſperity* in the language of ſome parts of this performance. He may think that the haughty and contemptuous ſtyle of the advocates for church-authority, has ſometimes prompted me to reply in a manner that cannot, upon cool reflection, be defended. But let the truly chriſtian-minded reader alſo conſider, the indignation with which our Lord himſelf treated the Scribes and Phariſees among the Jews, who *made the law of God void by their traditions, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*; and think what any perſon *ought* to feel, who conſiders the founders and abettors of all eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments as, in a great meaſure, liable to the ſame charge. For what are the creeds, and confeſſions of faith, to which they require ſubſcriptions; and what are all their eccleſiaſtical canons, but *the commandments of men?*

The advocates for church power are very ready to accuſe the Diſſenters of *indecency*, when, in defending themſelves, they reflect upon the eſtabliſhed church; but I do not ſee why, in a judgment of equity, the ſame civility and de-

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cency ſhould not be obſerved on both ſides; or why inſolence on one ſide ſhould not be anſwered by contempt on the other. The members of the eſtabliſhed church cannot help annexing to their ſtation, certain ideas of *ſuperiority*, and looking upon the Diſſenters as their *inferiors*; perſons whom they may uſe with very little ceremony, and who are obliged, notwithſtanding, to behave towards them with deference and reſpect. But they ſhould conſider that, in matters of religion, Diſſenters acknowledge no ſuperiors, and are the laſt of mankind to be moved (except with a generous indignation) by the mere arrogance of churchmen; even though, if it were poſſible, it ſhould exceed that of Dr. Warburton himſelf.

Now I mention this author, I muſt inform my reader, that I had no thoughts of animadverting upon him in this work, till I was informed by ſome intelligent and worthy clergymen of my acquaintance, that his *Alliance* was generally conſidered as the beſt defence of the preſent ſyſtem of church-authority, and that moſt other writers took their arguments from it. Till that time I had imagined, that this treatiſe of Dr. Warburton's, being as extravagant and ſophiſtical as any other of his *things**, it muſt, like them, have

* A term of *modeſty* and *reſpect*, firſt introduced by Dr. Warburton, and applied by him to the works of Dr. Leland, which, in real merit, are far ſuperior to his own.

been

been growing into contempt with all men of reading and common ſenſe. Had I received my information in time, it is probable that my ſtrictures upon this work would have made a ſection by themſelves, and I might have given a regular analyſis of it; but as this was not the caſe, I have inſerted them in the moſt convenient places that I could find. The edition I met with, and which I refer to, was the *ſecond*. I have ſince procured the fourth, much enlarged, which I believe is the laſt; but, glancing it over, I ſee no reaſon to alter any thing I have written.

I only obſerve, that in an *advertiſement* prefixed to it, he ſays, "It is a trite obſervation, that "divines make bad politicians. I believe it is "more generally true, that politicians are but "bad divines." A confeſſion which, I own, I ſhould not have expected from a man who, in the very ſame book, pleads for the propriety of making theſe ſame *politicians*, alias *bad divines*, the final judges in all eccleſiaſtical cauſes, and for giving them a power of enacting articles of faith and eccleſiaſtical canons.

In the Poſtſcript of this edition, I find a reply to ſomething that Lord Bolingbroke had advanced againſt the *Alliance*; and the author informs us, p. 271, that, in the ſame Poſtſcript, *the reader will ſee confuted at large*, what he calls *a puritanical principle*, and alſo *an abſurd aſſertion of*

of Hooker's, by which he entangled himſelf and his cauſe in inextricable difficulties, viz. *that civil and eccleſiaſtical power are things ſeparated by nature, and more eſpecially by divine inſtitution; and ſo independent of one another, that they muſt always continue independent.* Whatever ſucceſs this writer may have had in pulling up other foundations, I think he had better have left thoſe of the church as he found them: for the difficulties in which the ſcheme of the *Alliance* is entangled, appear to me to be far more inextricable, than thoſe of any other ſcheme of church-authority that I have yet ſeen. All that can be ſaid in its favour is, that, having leſs of the ſimplicity of truth, and, conſequently, being ſupported with more art and ſophiſtry, the abſurdity of it is not ſo obvious at firſt ſight, though it be ten times more glaring after it has been ſufficiently attended to. When high churchmen conſider the many changes that have taken place in their own ſyſtem of attack and defence, I hope they will leſs wonder at ſome ſimilar revolutions in the ſyſtem of the Diſſenters. That they have not been more numerous, may be owing to our not having had ſo many Warburtons among us; men who ſeldom make their appearance above once in a century, and who cannot be content with *ſtriking new lights out*, unleſs *they ſtrike out all the old ones too.**

* A pun taken from an ingenious epigram that appeared in the public papers ſome time ago.

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I alſo think it worth my while to take notice, that the French tranſlator of the Alliance, in an addreſs to Cardinal Fleury (printed in this fourth edition) in which he recommends ſuch a ſyſtem of church eſtabliſhment and toleration as this of the Biſhop of Glouceſter, obſerves, that the number of Roman catholicks in England diminiſhes every day, and that the only reaſon why they are not ſo good ſubjects in this country, as they are in Holland, is, that they are under more reſtraints here.

It will be ſeen, that in theſe *Conſiderations on church-authority*, I have taken no notice of any thing that has been written in the controverſy about the *Confeſſional*. That is an affair with which Diſſenters, as ſuch, have nothing to do. I would only obſerve, and I cannot help obſerving, that the violent oppoſition that has been made to the modeſt attempts, both of the *candid diſquiſitors*, and thoſe of the author of the Confeſſional, and his reſpectable friends, to procure a redreſs of only a few of the more intolerable grievances the clergy labour under, and a removal of ſome of the moſt obvious and capital defects in the eſtabliſhed church, has more weight than a hundred arguments drawn from theory only, in demonſtrating the folly of erecting ſuch complicated and unwieldy ſyſtems of policy, and in ſhowing the miſchiefs that attend them.

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How infinitely more at his eaſe is a man of an ingenuous diſpoſition, who all his life-time keeps his mind open to conviction, and would gladly follow every new light, and adopt every real improvement that occurs, or is ſuggeſted to him, among Diſſenters, than in the church of England. Whatever we complain of, we may pleaſe ourſelves with the reaſonable hope of rectifying, by a little prudent management; whereas all that a clergyman, of inferior rank at leaſt, can ſay in the like caſe, is, *Video meliora proboque, deteriora ſequor*, and *Pudet hæc opprobria nobis, &c.*

What are the difficulties in our *external* circumſtances (aggravated as they are a hundred times in the repreſentations of Dr. Balguy and other writers) compared with the anguiſh of that man's mind, who, if he *can* reconcile himſelf to continuing in a ſituation, into which he has introduced himſelf by a ſubſcription which nothing could induce him to repeat, is yet obliged (if he officiate as a clergyman at all) ſolemnly to recite ſentiments which he believes to be abſurd, if not abſolutely impious. Or if a man, who really diſbelieves the articles of the church of England, can, *by any means*, no matter what, reconcile himſelf to a repeated ſubſcription, what a poor compenſation is it, to be flattered with the proſpect of riſing in *ſuch a church*;

church; and conſequently be engaged in a *courſe of ambition*, in which he has generally nothing but *hope*, *(which ſprings eternal in the human breaſt)* to enable him to bear the cutting diſappointments he is perpetually ſubject to; a courſe in which the whole tenor of his ſoul is often loſt, and in which he is conſtantly diverted from an attention to his proper ſtudies and duty as a teacher of chriſtianity; an attention which can only conſiſt with a chearful acquieſcence in a man's ſtation, and an excluſion of foreign and diſtracting objects of purſuit.

Or if, by the aſſiduity of twenty, thirty, or forty years, and by the practice of ſuch arts as are uſed to obtain preferment of any other kind, a man ſhould be able to advance himſelf in the church conſiderably above his original rank in life; ſtill the ſame temper and habit of mind, by which he was prompted to endeavour to work himſelf ſo high, continuing, and being ſtrengthened by exerciſe, he can have but little enjoyment of his envied diſtinctions, ſo long as there is any thing that he has not yet attained within his reach. Little did the founders of church eſtabliſhments conſider, of what unſpeakable importance it is to the intereſts of religion, that the ambition of chriſtian miniſters be circumſcribed within narrow limits, when they left them ſuch unbounded ſcope for courting

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Such, however, is the virtue of ſome men, that it is proof againſt all the bad influence of the conſtitution of which they are members. Without flattering, or tormenting themſelves with a *vain ambition*, many excellent clergymen, worthy of a better ſituation, contentedly ſit down to the proper duty of their ſtation. Their only object is *to do good to the ſouls of men*, and their only hope of reward is in that world, where *they who have been wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they who have turned many to righteouſneſs as the ſtars for ever and ever.* Such characters as theſe I truly revere; and it is chiefly for the ſake of forming more ſuch, that I wiſh the eſtabliſhment of the church of England might be reformed in ſome eſſential points*. The powers of reaſon and conſcience plead for ſuch a reformation, but, alas! the powers of

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this world are againſt it. This unnatural *ally* of religion (or rather her imperious *maſter*) without whoſe permiſſion nothing can be done, will not admit of it.

But at the ſame time that, from a love of truth, and a juſt regard for the purity of a divine religion, we bear a public teſtimony againſt thoſe abuſes which men have introduced into it; let us, as becomes chriſtians, have the candour to make proper allowances for the prejudices and prepoſſeſſions, even of the founders, promoters, and abettors of theſe anti-chriſtian ſyſtems; and ſtill farther let us be from indulging a thought to the prejudice of thoſe, who have been educated in a reverence for theſe modes of religion, and have not ſtrength of mind to ſeparate their ideas of theſe *forms*, from thoſe of the *power* of it. In this caſe, let us be particularly careful how we give offence to any ſerious and well-diſpoſed minds, and patiently bear with the wheat and the tares growing together till the harveſt.

Such is my belief in the doctrine of an overruling providence, that I have no doubt, but that every thing in the whole ſyſtem of nature, how noxious ſoever it may be in ſome reſpects, has real, though unknown uſes; and alſo that every

every thing, even the groſſeſt abuſes in the civil or eccleſiaſtical conſtitutions of particular ſtates, are ſubſervient to the wiſe and gracious deſigns of him, who, notwithſtanding theſe appearances, ſtill *rules in the kingdom of men.* Moreover, as an *enthuſiaſt* (a term which, with Dr. Balguy, is ſynonymous to *Diſſenter*, or *ſectary*; and I have no objection to any of them) I pleaſe myſelf with the proſpect of the intire diſſolution of all the preſent forms, both of civil and eccleſiaſtical government; when *the kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt, and he ſhall reign for ever and ever.*

CONSI-

THE PREFACE.

CONSIDERATIONS ON CHURCH-AUTHORITY.

SECTION I.

Some distinctions that have been made on the subject of religious liberty, &c. considered.

IN order to clear the way for the considerations that follow, and to illustrate some of the fundamental principles of religious liberty, I beg the reader's indulgence for an *introductory section*, to animadvert on a few distinctions that have been suggested by some persons who have written, at different times, on this subject, and which I think have tended to introduce confusion into our ideas concerning it. Many of my readers may think some of the cases I shall mention unworthy of the notice I have taken of them, but I hope they will excuse my giving them a place in this section, when they consider that it is, at least, possible they may have occasioned some difficulty to other persons unused to these speculations.

Religion is ſometimes conſidered as of *a perſonal*, and ſometimes as of *a political* nature. In ſome meaſure, indeed, every thing that concerns individuals muſt affect the ſocieties which they compoſe, but it by no means follows, that it is, therefore, *right*, or *wiſe* for ſocieties (*i. e.* mankind collectively taken) to intermeddle with every thing, ſo as to make laws, and appoint ſanctions concerning every thing; becauſe, in numberleſs caſes, more confuſion and inconvenience would neceſſarily ariſe from the interference, than from the want of it; ſince individuals are, in many reſpects, better ſituated for the purpoſe of judging and providing for themſelves than magiſtrates, as ſuch, can be.

Magiſtrates are the *ſervants* of the public, and therefore the uſe of them may be illuſtrated by that of ſervants. Now let a man's fortune or his incapacity be ſuch, that his dependence on ſervants is ever ſo great; there muſt be many things that he will be obliged to do for himſelf, and in which any attempt to aſſiſt him would only embarraſs and diſtreſs him; and in many caſes in which perſons do make uſe of ſervants, they would be much more at their eaſe, if their ſituation would allow them to do without their aſſiſtance. If magiſtrates be conſidered in the more reſpectable light of *repreſentatives* and *deputies* of the people, it ſhould likewiſe be conſidered,

ſidered, that there are many caſes, in which it is more convenient for a man to act *in perſon* than by any deputation whatever.

Theſe, and many other reaſons, lead me to conſider the buſineſs of religion, and every thing fairly connected with it, as intirely *a perſonal concern*, and altogether foreign to the nature, object, and uſe of civil magiſtracy. As a man, and a member of civil ſociety, I am deſirous to receive ſuch aſſiſtance as *numbers* can give to *individuals*, but by no means that aſſiſtance which numbers, as ſuch, cannot give to individuals; and, leaſt of all, ſuch as individuals are better qualified to impart to numbers. There are many things reſpecting human happineſs that properly fall under the two laſt mentioned claſſes, and the great difficulty concerning the due extent of civil government lies in diſtinguiſhing the objects that belong to theſe claſſes. Little difficulty, however, has, in fact, ariſen from the nature of the things, in compariſon of the difficulties that have been occaſioned by its being the intereſt of men to combine, confound, and perplex them.

It is, indeed, impoſſible to name any two things, about which men are concerned, ſo remote in their nature, but that they have ſome connections and mutual influences; but were I aſked

what two things I ſhould think to be in the *leaſt danger* of being confounded, and which even the ingenuity of man could find the *leaſt pretence* for involving together, I ſhould ſay the things that relate to *this life*, and thoſe that relate to the *life to come*. Defining the object of civil government, in the moſt extenſive ſenſe, to be the making proviſion for the ſecure and comfortable enjoyment of this life, by preventing one man from injuring another in his perſon or property; I ſhould think the office of the civil magiſtrate to be in no great danger of being incroached upon, by the methods that men might think proper to take, to provide for their happineſs after death.

All the civil ſocieties we enter into in this life will be diſſolved by death. When this life is over, I ſhall not be able to claim any of the privileges of an Engliſhman; I ſhall not be bound by any of the laws of England, nor ſhall I owe any allegiance to its ſovereign. When, therefore, my ſituation in a future life ſhall have no connection with my privileges or obligations as an Engliſhman, why ſhould thoſe perſons who make laws for Engliſhmen interfere with my conduct, with reſpect to a ſtate, to which their power does not extend.

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Beſides, there is ſomething in the nature of religion that makes it more than *out of the proper ſphere*, or province of the civil magiſtrate to intermeddle with it. The duties of religion, properly underſtood, ſeem to be, in ſome meaſure, incompatible with the interference of the civil power. For the purpoſe and object of religion neceſſarily ſuppoſe *the powers of individuals*, and a *reſponſibility* which is the conſequence of thoſe powers; ſo that the civil magiſtrate by taking any of thoſe powers from individuals, and aſſuming them to himſelf, doth ſo far incapacitate them for the duties of religion. Thus, if I be commanded by divine authority to *ſearch the ſcriptures*, and the magiſtrate forbid me the uſe of them, how can I diſcharge my duty? And for the ſame reaſon, I muſt think the authority of the magiſtrates oppoſed to that of God, in every caſe in which human laws impede the uſe of my faculties in matters of religion.

As a being capable of immortal life (which is a thing of infinitely more conſequence to me than all the political conſiderations of this world) I muſt endeavour to render myſelf acceptable to God, by ſuch diſpoſitions and ſuch conduct, as he has required, in order to fit me for future happineſs. For this purpoſe, it is evidently requiſite, that I diligently uſe my reaſon, in order

what two things I ſhould think to be in the *leaſt danger* of being confounded, and which even the ingenuity of man could find the *leaſt pretence* for involving together, I ſhould ſay the things that relate to *this life*, and thoſe that relate to the *life to come*. Defining the object of civil government, in the moſt extenſive ſenſe, to be the making proviſion for the ſecure and comfortable enjoyment of this life, by preventing one man from injuring another in his perſon or property; I ſhould think the office of the civil magiſtrate to be in no great danger of being incroached upon, by the methods that men might think proper to take, to provide for their happineſs after death.

All the civil ſocieties we enter into in this life will be diſſolved by death. When this life is over, I ſhall not be able to claim any of the privileges of an Engliſhman; I ſhall not be bound by any of the laws of England, nor ſhall I owe any allegiance to its ſovereign. When, therefore, my ſituation in a future life ſhall have no connection with my privileges or obligations as an Engliſhman, why ſhould thoſe perſons who make laws for Engliſhmen interfere with my conduct, with reſpect to a ſtate, to which their power does not extend.

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to make myſelf acquainted with the will of God; and alſo that I have liberty to do whatever I believe he requires, provided I do not moleſt my fellow creatures by ſuch aſſumed liberty. But all human eſtabliſhments, as ſuch, obſtruct freedom of inquiry in matters of religion, by laying an *undue bias* upon the mind, if they be not ſuch, as by their expreſs conſtitutions prevent all inquiry, and preclude every poſſible effect of it.

Chriſtianity, by being a more ſpiritual and moral conſtitution than any other form of religion that ever appeared in the world, requires men to think and act for themſelves more accurately than any other. But human eſtabliſhments, by calling off men's attention from the commandments of God to thoſe of men, tend to defeat the great ends of religion. They are, therefore, incompatible with the genius of chriſtianity.

In examining the right of the civil magiſtrate to eſtabliſh any mode of religion, or that of the ſubject to oppoſe it, the *goodneſs* of the religion, or of the mode of it, is not to be taken into the queſtion; but only the *propriety*, which is the ſame with the *utility* of the civil magiſtrate as ſuch, interfering in this buſineſs. For what the magiſtrate may think to be very juſt, and even conducive to the good of ſociety, the ſubject may think to be wrong, and hurtful to it. If a chri-

a chriſtian magiſtrate have a right to eſtabliſh any mode of the chriſtian religion, or the chriſtian religion in general, a Mahometan governor muſt have the ſame right to eſtabliſh the Mahometan religion; and no liberty can be claimed by a chriſtian under a Mahometan government, to exerciſe the chriſtian religion, that may not, in the ſame degree, be claimed by a Mahometan ſubject of a chriſtian government, to exerciſe the Mahometan religion. Alſo, if it be unreaſonable and oppreſſive to oblige chriſtian ſubjects to ſupport the Mahometan religion, it is equally unreaſonable and oppreſſive to oblige a Mahometan to ſupport the chriſtian religion, in the place where he reſides; or to oblige chriſtians of one denomination to the ſupport of another mode of it, which they do not approve.

The authority of God and conſcience may always, with equal juſtice, be oppoſed to human authority; and the appeal of Peter and John to the Jewiſh magiſtrates, concerning their obligation to *obey God rather than man*, will equally ſerve a Proteſtant, in a Popiſh eſtabliſhment, or a Diſſenter of any kind in a Proteſtant one. It is of no avail to the Papiſt, or the Proteſtant, in any eſtabliſhment, to pretend that the religion they enforce is *true*, or that it is the ſame, in general, with that which thoſe who diſſent from them profeſs; becauſe the Proteſtant

Proteſtant and the Diſſenter do not object to the eſtabliſhment in thoſe reſpects in which they believe it to be *true*, but in thoſe in which they believe it to be *falſe*, and to require them to believe and do what their conſcience diſapproves. And for a Proteſtant, of any denomination whatever, to maintain his own right to reſiſt the impoſitions of a Popiſh government, and at the ſame time to inſiſt upon a right to impoſe upon his fellow chriſtians of other Proteſtant denominations, is too abſurd to admit of a formal refutation.

Some perſons, of narrow minds, may be ready to admit of a plea for the toleration of all ſects of *Proteſtants*. They may bear them ſome degree of good will, as *brethren*, or, at leaſt, as *diſtant relations*, though the blood in their veins be not equally pure with their own; but, in order to demonſtrate that there may be a licentiouſneſs in toleration, and that we muſt ſtop ſomewhere, they ſay, What muſt we do with *heathens*, and *atheiſts*. I anſwer, the very ſame that you, chriſtians, would wiſh that heathens and atheiſts, in your ſituation, ſhould do to you being in theirs. If your party has been ſo long in power, that you cannot, even in ſuppoſition, ſeparate the idea of it from that of the authority which has been ſo long connected with it; read the hiſtory of the primitive church,

church, and ſee what it was that the firſt chriſtians wiſhed and pleaded for, under the Pagan emperors. Read the antient chriſtian apologies; and do the infidels of the preſent age the juſtice to put them, or at leaſt part of them, into their mouths.

Others have the moderation and good ſenſe to admit the reaſonableneſs of perſons being allowed to judge for themſelves, and *think* as they pleaſe in matters of religion, and even to exerciſe whatever mode of religion their conſciences approve of; but they will not admit of any thing that has a tendency to increaſe the obnoxious ſect; no publication of books, or other attempts to make proſelytes; not even a reflection upon the eſtabliſhed religion, though it be neceſſary to a vindication of their own. But what ſignifies a privilege of judging for ourſelves, if we have not the neceſſary means of forming a right judgment, by the peruſal of books containing the evidence of both ſides of the queſtion? What ſome diſtinguiſh by the names of *active* and *paſſive* oppoſition to an eſtabliſhed religion, differ only in name and degree. To defend myſelf, and to attack my adverſary, is, in many caſes, the very ſame thing, and the one cannot be done without the other.

Beſides,

Beſides, the perſons who make uſe of this diſtinction, ſhould conſider that, for the reaſons they alledge, the Jewiſh rulers did right to forbid Peter and John to preach, or to teach, in the name of Jeſus of Nazareth, and that Peter and John did wrong in not ſubmitting to that prohibition. They ſhould conſider that the primitive chriſtians, under heathen governments, had no right, according to their maxims, to any thing more than the private exerciſe of their worſhip, and that they offended againſt *the powers that then were*, and that were *ordained of God*, when they wrote their excellent books, and took the pains they did to propagate their religion among all ranks of men, and among all nations of the world; though they acted in obedience to the ſolemn injunction of our Lord, who bade them *go and preach the goſpel to every creature.*

By *the goſpel* every chriſtian will, and muſt underſtand, the goſpel in its purity; *i. e.* what he apprehends to be the purity of the goſpel, in oppoſition, not only to heatheniſm, and religions *fundamentally falſe*, but to erroneous chriſtianity, or to religions that are *in part true.* Whatever be the religious opinions, therefore, that I ſeriouſly think are agreeable to the word of God, and of importance to the happineſs of mankind, I look upon myſelf as obliged to take every prudent method of propagating them, both

both by the uſe of ſpeech and writing; and the man who refrains from doing this, when he is convinced that he ſhould do good upon the whole by attempting it, whatever riſque he might run in conſequence of oppoſing anti-chriſtian eſtabliſhments, is a traitor to his proper lord and maſter, and ſhows that he fears more *them who can only kill the body* (whether by the heathen methods of beheading, crucifying, throwing to the wild beaſts, &c. or the chriſtian methods of burning alive, and roaſting before a ſlow fire) than him, *who can caſt both ſoul and body into hell.*

It is ſaid by ſome, who think themſelves obliged to vindicate the conduct of Chriſt and his apoſtles, that, though no *general* plea to oppoſe an eſtabliſhed religion can be admitted, in excuſe of a pretended reformer, yet that a *ſpecial* plea, ſuch as a belief of a divine commiſſion, and the like, will excuſe him. But I can ſee no material difference in theſe caſes. The voice of *conſcience* is, in all caſes, as the *voice of God* to every man. It is, therefore, my duty to endeavour to enlighten the minds of my friends, my countrymen, and mankind in general, as far as I have ability and opportunity; and to exert myſelf with more or leſs zeal, in proportion as I myſelf ſhall judge the importance of the occaſion requires, let my honeſt endeavours be conſidered as ever ſo factious and ſeditious,

by

by thoſe who are aggrieved by them. It is no new cry among the enemies of reformation, *The men who have turned the world upſide down are come hither alſo.*

There are ſome who confine the obligation to propagate chriſtianity to the *clergy*, and even to thoſe of them who have *a regular commiſſion* for that purpoſe, according to the form of eſtabliſhed churches; and ſay that *laymen* cannot be under any obligation to trouble themſelves about it, in whatever part of the world they be caſt; and what they ſay concerning the propagation of chriſtianity they would extend to the reformation of it. But I can ſee no foundation for this diſtinction, either in reaſon, or in the ſcriptures. The propagation, or reformation of chriſtianity, is comprehended in the general idea of *promoting uſeful knowledge* of any kind, and this is certainly the duty of every man, in proportion to his ability and opportunity.

Our Saviour gives no hint of any difference between *clergy* and *laity* among his diſciples. The twelve apoſtles were only diſtinguiſhed by him as profeſſed witneſſes of his life, death, and reſurrection. After the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, ſupernatural gifts were equally communicated to all chriſtian converts. The diſtinction of *elders* was only ſuch as years and experience intitled

intitled men to, and only reſpected the internal government of particular churches. As to the propagation of chriſtianity abroad, or the reformation of corruptions in it at home, there is nothing in the ſcriptures, that can lead us to imagine it to be the duty of one man more than another. Every man who underſtands the chriſtian religion, I conſider as having the ſame commiſſion to teach it that I myſelf have; and I think my own commiſſion as good as that of any biſhop, in England, or in Rome.

Some of the advocates for eſtabliſhments lay great ſtreſs on the diſtinction between *poſitive* and *negative* reſtraints put upon diſſenters. The former they affect to diſclaim, but the latter they avow, and pretend that it is no perſecution. But here I can find no real difference, except in degree. An excluſion from an advantage, and a ſubjection to a poſitive diſadvantage agree in this, that the man who is ſubject to either of them is in *a worſe condition* on that account, than he would otherwiſe have been. If a man, for conſcience ſake, be excluded from a lucrative office, to which another perſon, of a different perſuaſion, has acceſs; he ſuffers as much, as if the office had been open to him, and a fine, equal to the advantage he would have gained by it, impoſed upon him. Nay, it is eaſy to ſuppoſe caſes, in which negative

reſtraints

reſtraints may be a greater hardſhip than poſitive ones. The *interdiction of fire and water* is not a ſentence of poſitive puniſhment, and yet baniſhment, or death muſt be the conſequence. Notwithſtanding all this, negative reſtraints, however ſevere, muſt not be called perſecution, while poſitive reſtraints, how light ſoever, cannot be denied to fall under that obnoxious appellation.

In reality thoſe who defend the neceſſity and propriety of laying diſſenters under reſtraints, without chuſing to be advocates for poſitive ones, are only afraid of the term *perſecution*, which, happily for the friends of liberty, lies under an *odium* at preſent; but their arguments would be much clearer, and loſe nothing of their ſtrength; and their ideas more free from confuſion, if they would openly maintain, that a certain degree of perſecution was juſt, though certain degrees of it were unjuſt; and they might eaſily ſay, that they could not pretend to fix any preciſe boundary in this caſe, but muſt leave it to be determined by circumſtances.

SECTION II.

Of the extent of eccleſiaſtical authority, and the power of civil governors in matters of religion.

IT is ſaid that *a chriſtian church*, or a chriſtian ſociety, and the *power* of chriſtian ſocieties, are certainly ſpoken of in the New Teſtament; that ſocieties cannot ſubſiſt without *officers* and *laws*, nor can laws be enforced without *penalties*. All this, and every conſequence of the like nature, is readily granted; but the ſanctions of the church of Chriſt in this world are, like itſelf, and like *the weapons of the chriſtian warfare, not carnal*, and temporal, but of a *ſpiritual* nature; and do not affect a man's perſon, life, liberty, or eſtate. All that our Saviour directs, in caſe of the greateſt refractorineſs, is to conſider ſuch obſtinate offenders as *heathen men and publicans*; that is, we are juſtified in ceaſing to look upon them as brethren and fellow chriſtians; and they are not intitled to our peculiar affection, and attention, as ſuch.

The

The *delivering over to Satan*, which St. Paul mentions, as a puniſhment for the greateſt offence that could be committed in the chriſtian church, is not a delivering over to the *civil magiſtrate*, or to the *executioner*. In ſhort, all that the New Teſtament authorizes a chriſtian church, or its officers, to do, is to exclude from their ſociety thoſe perſons whom they deem unworthy of it. There is no hint of ſuch excluded members lying under any civil diſqualification. If they were not to be conſidered as *chriſtians*, and proper members of chriſtian ſocieties; they were ſtill *men*, proper members of civil ſociety, and not liable to civil penalties, unleſs they had, likewiſe, offended againſt the laws of the ſtate.

The horrid ſentence of *excommunication*, as it is in uſe in the church of Rome, or the church of England, is well known not to have been introduced into the chriſtian church, till about the fifth century, when it was brought by the barbarous Celtes, and other Germanic nations, from their own Druidical religion; which was, in this reſpect, analogous to that of the Hindoos. In both of them excommunication was the heavieſt puniſhment that could be incurred in human ſociety, as it cut a man off from all the benefits of it.

It will be ſaid that, in the times of St. Paul, temporal penalties were inflicted upon members of the chriſtian church, for their irregularities committed in it. *For this cauſe*, ſays the apoſtle, *ſome are weak and ſickly among you, and ſome ſleep*; which is generally underſtood to refer to ſickneſs and death, as a puniſhment for their ſhameful abuſe of the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper. But it ſhould be conſidered, that theſe puniſhments were the immediate *act of God*, and in the ſtricteſt ſenſe miraculous, like the death of Ananias and Sapphira, or the blindneſs of Elymas the ſorcerer. Theſe caſes, therefore, will not authorize puniſhments inflicted by men. All that can be done to thoſe who are guilty of contempt againſt church power, is to leave them to *the judgment of God*, who will ſufficiently protect his church, and who is a better judge of its real danger than man can be; and if he chuſe to bear with ſuch offenders, what have we to do to obſtruct the effects of his long ſuffering and mercy.

I have no objection, however, on my own account, to allowing eccleſiaſtcal officers to do more than Chriſt, than St. Paul, or the other apoſtles ever pretended to. Let them not only *predict*, but, if their zeal prompt them to it, let them *imprecate* divine judgments. Let them pray that *God would ſpeedily plead his own cauſe*, taking it for granted to be their own. Were I

the obnoxious perſon, I ſhould be very eaſy upon the occaſion, provided their own cruel and mercileſs hands were not upon me.

It is allowed by many, that chriſtian churches, as ſuch, and its officers as ſuch, have no right to inflict civil puniſhments; but they ſay the civil magiſtrate may embrace the chriſtian religion, and enforce its precepts by civil penalties. But have civil magiſtrates, when they become chriſtians, a power of altering, or new modelling the chriſtian religion, any more than other members of the chriſtian church? If not, its laws and ſanctions remain juſt as they did before, ſuch as Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles left them; and the things that may have been ſubſtituted in their place cannot be called chriſtianity, but are ſomething elſe.

If the civil magiſtrate chuſe to become a chriſtian, by all means let the doors of the chriſtian church be open to him, as they ought to be to all, without diſtinction or reſpect of perſons; but when he is in, let him be conſidered as no more than any other private chriſtian. Give him a vote in all caſes in which the whole aſſembly is concerned, but let him, like others, be ſubject to church cenſures, and even to be excommunicated, or excluded for notorious ill behaviour.

It

It is, certainly, contrary to all ideas of common ſenſe, to ſuppoſe that civil magiſtrates embracing chriſtianity have, therefore, a power of making laws for the chriſtian church, and enforcing the obſervance of them by ſanctions altogether unſuitable to its nature. The idea cannot be admitted without ſuppoſing a total change in the very firſt principles and eſſentials of chriſtianity. If civil penalties be introduced into the chriſtian church, it is, in every ſenſe, and to every purpoſe, making it *a kingdom of this world.* Its governors then aſſume a power over men's perſons and property, a power unknown in the inſtitutes of our religion. If, moreover, the civil magiſtrate take upon him to preſcribe creeds and confeſſions of faith, as is the caſe in England, what is it but to uſurp a *dominion over the faith of chriſtians*, a power which the apoſtles themſelves expreſsly diſclaimed.

It may be ſaid, that the civil magiſtrate, upon embracing chriſtianity, and being convinced of the excellency of its precepts, may chuſe to incorporate them into his ſcheme of civil policy, and enforce them by civil penalties, not as matters of religion, but as belonging to civil government. Thus Chriſt has forbidden polygamy, and the civil magiſtrate (a Turk for inſtance) being converted to chriſtianity, in order to put an end to the former cuſtom, may make it

death to marry two wives. He may alſo think the miniſters of the chriſtian church a very reſpectable order of men, and inveſt them with civil power; whereby they may be enabled to inflict civil puniſhments, in caſes where, before, they could only make uſe of admonitions; and he may tax the people for their ſupport. Thinking one mode of chriſtianiy preferable to another, may he not alſo, arm its miniſters, with a civil power for ſuppreſſing the reſt; when, before, they could only have uſed arguments for this purpoſe? Are civil and eccleſiaſtical powers ſo very incompatible, that the ſame perſons may not be inveſted with both? Were not all heads of families, both *kings* and *prieſts*, in the patriarchal times?

I anſwer, that, whatever regulations the civil magiſtrate may adopt, yet, as his adopting of them, and enforcing them by civil penalties makes them, confeſſedly, to be of a civil nature, he is not intitled to obedience with reſpect to them, ſo far as they are of a religious nature. If, therefore, any private chriſtian ſhould differ in opinion from his civil magiſtrate, or thoſe inveſted by him with civil power, with reſpect to thoſe things which are of a religious nature, he cannot conſider himſelf as under any more obligation to ſubmit to him, than he would be to ſubmit to a heathen magiſtrate in the ſame caſe.

caſe. A conſcientious chriſtian will never heſitate about obeying God rather than man, though that man ſhould be a magiſtrate, or though he ſhould be a chriſtian, and aſſume the title of ſupreme head of the whole, or any part of the chriſtian church. Any other maxims than theſe, it is evident, might be attended with the utter ſubverſion of the chriſtian religion. For the civil magiſtrate would have nothing to do but to adopt chriſtianity into his ſyſtem of civil policy; and then, having the whole within his own cognizance, he might add and alter at pleaſure, till he had made it quite a different thing from what he found it.

It is upon this principle of the civil magiſtrate converting chriſtianity into civil policy, or ſomething ſimilar to it, that Dr. Balguy, and, I believe, moſt of the advocates for church power in England at preſent, found their claim to eccleſiaſtical authority. The clergy of former ages went upon quite another ground. They claimed authority *jure divino*, and ſcorned to derive their power from the civil magiſtrate. Theſe two ſpecies of authority were perpetually oppoſed to one another; and the church encroached upon the ſtate, or the ſtate upon the church, as opportunity favoured their reſpective attempts; inſomuch that the hiſtory of Europe, in the dark ages, is little more than an account of

the violent ſtruggles between theſe two contrary powers.

The Romiſh clergy ſtill keep up the ſame pretences, and ſo did the clergy of the church of England, till they were fairly argued, or laughed out of them. Upon this, they have, lately, ſet up another claim to power, not *contrary to*, but *under* that of the civil magiſtrate. In their preſent ideas, the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment is a *creature of the ſtate*. They conſider themſelves as *civil officers*, employed by the king to teach the religion the ſtate has adopted, and they receive their wages, as other ſervants of the crown.

Now, admitting all this, what have the people to do with them as miniſters of the goſpel, and ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt; ſince *they teach for doctrines the commandments of men?* Hitherto the chriſtian people of this country have imagined, that their miniſters came to them with a commiſſion from Chriſt, to teach them the things that relate to their everlaſting happineſs, and thereby ſecure the ſalvation of their immortal ſouls. Hitherto they have held them in reverence as ſucceſſors of the apoſtles, and ſubmitted themſelves to them, as to perſons, *who watched for their ſouls, as thoſe who muſt give an account to the chief ſhepherd, when he ſhall appear*, and who, for their

their good, were inveſted with ſpiritual power, independent of all human authority.

Should they not now, therefore, be apprized, that their ghoſtly ſuperiors have, of late, renounced the principle on which they have hitherto yielded them obedience, and that their clergy chuſe to rank with juſtices of the peace, conſtables, the ſolicitor, and attorney-general, and other civil and crown officers, that they may, accordingly, change the mode of reſpect they have hitherto paid them? They now acknowledge that their being *moved by the Holy Ghoſt* to undertake the miniſterial office, and their being choſen by a chriſtian congregation to officiate among them, avails nothing, without a commiſſion from the civil magiſtrate. This, therefore, is, evidently, their principal character, and in this light, chiefly, ought their people to conſider them. And I cannot help thinking, that a general and juſt ſenſe of this circumſtance, would operate very materially with their reſpective flocks.

Not that I wonder that the advocates for the church of England have changed the ground of their defence, and that they are not a little embaraſſed with their *temporal ſupreme head.* It was a thing that was quite *new* in the chriſtian church, a thing that was by no means their own choice, originally

originally, but was forced upon them, and what they are now obliged to make the beſt of; ſo that if one hypotheſis will not ſupport the innovation, they muſt have recourſe to another, in order to keep up, as well as they can, the face of an argument. At this day, articles of faith, and rules of church diſcipline are enacted, and liable to be abrogated by act of parliament; whereas all this buſineſs was formerly done in ſynods, and general councils, which acknowledged no dependence on civil power; and, low as is my opinion of the perſons who compoſed the ſynods, and general councils of former times, I cannot help thinking them more competent judges of articles of chriſtian faith than any *king of England*, aſſiſted, or not aſſiſted by an *Engliſh parliament*. When they ſhall think proper to *enact* any more eccleſiaſtical canons, or confeſſions of faith, I hope that, for the ſake of decency, they will purge the two houſes of thoſe members who cannot give ſatisfactory evidence that they are chriſtians at all. But, upon recollection, Dr. Balguy will not think this circumſtance neceſſary, ſince, according to his determination, the civil magiſtrate is not to provide for himſelf, but for the *largeſt* ſect among his ſubjects; and therefore a Mahometan magiſtrate might be as ſafely truſted to make chriſtian conſtitutions as any chriſtian magiſtrate whatever. Perhaps he might be thought more proper,

ſince,

ſince, having no bias in favour of any particular ſect of chriſtians, he might be expected to be a more impartial judge in the caſe.

The reaſon which the Biſhop of Glouceſter gives for the propriety of making the civil magiſtrate the ſupreme head of the church, "whereby he becomes poſſeſſed of the ſole right of ordering and decreeing every thing that the miniſters and officers of the church had before a power of doing, (ſo that even all matters of opinion are out of the juriſdiction of the church)"* is really curious. "The church," it ſeems, "wants protection from external violence. This protection the ſtate only can give to it; but," ſays this author, "protection not being to be afforded to any perſon or body, without power over that perſon or body, in the perſon or body protecting, it neceſſarily follows, that the civil magiſtrate muſt be ſupreme."

I cannot help thinking that the church, according to this author, made a very hard bargain, and paid very dear for protection. Might not the ſtate have been content to *protect* the church, without *dictating* to her in eccleſiaſtical matters? Certainly at the time this famous

* Alliance, p. 64, 81, 87.

alliance

alliance was made, the agents for the church were under a panick, and muſt have forgotten that Chriſt himſelf had promiſed to protect his church, to be with it to the end of the world, and that the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt it.

Were it not for the power to favour the profeſſors of religion with which magiſtrates are inveſted, one might wonder how, of all mankind, they ſhould ever have been thought of, as proper to take the lead in an affair of this nature. I ſhould much ſooner have thought of applying to them to ſuperintend the buſineſs of medicine, in which the healths and lives of their ſubjects are ſo much concerned. But happily for mankind, they have not taken it into their heads to intermeddle ſo much with it. The reaſon is, that there is nothing in the buſineſs of medicine, of which they could avail themſelves; whereas a league with *prieſts*, who have always a great influence over mankind, has often been extremely convenient for them.

Of all mankind, ſurely magiſtrates have the leaſt leiſure, and the leaſt capacity for judging in matters of religion. Conſequently, they are moſt likely to determine raſhly, and in ſuch a manner as beſt ſuits with their worldly views. Of this we have a notable example in the Hampton-

Court

Court conference. There the advocates for preſbyterianiſm and epiſcopacy had a ſolemn meeting, to debate on the merits of their reſpective modes of church government, in the preſence of King James I. (of bleſſed memory in the church of England) at a time when, perhaps, a majority of the nation were diſpoſed in favour of preſbyterianſm. But was a king, with his head full of the notions of arbitrary power, in a proper diſpoſition to decide a controverſy of this nature: and might it not have been expected, that the maxim *No biſhop no king* would be ſufficient to determine his choice, againſt the weight of a thouſand ſolid arguments. The iſſue of the conference is well known, but no better than it was before it took place. Such cauſe have the advocates for epiſcopacy to boaſt of their triumph!

The hiſtory of this Hampton-Court controverſy ſo admirably exemplifies the reaſoning of the Biſhop of Glouceſter, that I wonder it was not adduced by him, in aid of his argument, to prove, that the civil magiſtrate is more likely to decide according to truth in matters of religion than churchmen. Let us hear the great champion himſelf on this ſubject, as this part of his argument ſeems to be the great hinge on which the moſt important part of the controverſy concerning

cerning eſtabliſhments, turns.* "Church ſanctity "being acquired by ſeceſſion, and retirement "from human affairs, and that ſeceſſion render- "ing men ignorant of civil ſociety, its rights and "intereſts (in the place of which will ſucceed "all the follies of ſuperſtition and fanaticiſm) "we muſt needs conclude that religion, under "ſuch directors and reformers, will deviate "from truth, and conſequently a capacity, in "proportion, of ſerving ſociety. On the other "hand, when religion comes under the magi- "ſtrate's directions, its purity muſt needs be "well ſupported and preſerved. For truth and "public utility coinciding, the civil magiſtrate, "as ſuch, will ſee it for his intereſt to ſeek af- "ter and promote truth in religion, and by "means of public utility, which his office en- "ables him ſo well to underſtand, he will never "be at a loſs to know where ſuch truth is to "be found, ſo that it is impoſſible, under this "civil influence, for religion ever to deviate "far from truth." *Riſum teneatis amici!*

This author, indeed, thinks there is a neceſ- ſity for churchmen making part of the legiſlative body, leſt, inſtead of being *ſubjects*, they ſhould be the *ſlaves* of the ſtate, p. 78. But ſo long as the biſhops in parliament have no negative

* Alliance, p. 51.

upon

upon the reſolutions of the houſe (a privilege which this biſhop himſelf would not allow them) I do not ſee what their ſeat there would avail them, if all the laity ſhould differ from them in their opinion concerning religious matters. In this caſe, eccleſiaſtical canons would be made, and articles of faith enacted, as contrary to their inclinations, as if they had not been conſulted at all. So that, in caſe of an oppoſition between the two powers, the clergy are ſtill entirely at the mercy of the laity, and therefore their ſlaves.

Upon the whole, conſidering every thing relating to this new buſineſs of a temporal head over chriſtians, who are expreſsly commanded to *call no man maſter upon earth*; and conſidering how averſe the clergy always were to ſuch a cataſtrophe in their affairs, and how little they were prepared for it; I cannot help thinking, that they have given very ſtriking proofs of their acuteneſs, and preſence of mind, in defending it ſo plauſibly as they have done.

To make this caſe of a temporal head to a ſpiritual church the more intelligible, let us ſuppoſe there are, in any country, a number of perſons, who have formed themſelves into a ſociety for promoting natural philoſophy; that the civil magiſtrate hears of it, and, having a taſte for the ſtudy, becomes a member. If, upon this,

this, he ſhould take upon him to make laws for the ſociety, and to enforce them with civil penalties; or if he ſhould compel the members to ſubſcribe to particular propoſitions, and hypotheſes, ſhould we not pronounce that the philoſophical ſociety was, to all intents and purpoſes, diſſolved? In like manner a chriſtian magiſtrate, pretending to make laws to the chriſtian church, is to be conſidered as doing every thing in his power to aboliſh chriſtianity, and ſetting up ſomething elſe in its place, that may be more or leſs like to it, juſt as it may happen.

It may be ſaid that an union of civil and eccleſiaſtical power may take place in another manner, namely by a nation of chriſtians voluntarily chuſing the civil magiſtrate to be their protector or head, and to make laws for them. So alſo a ſociety of philoſophers may chuſe the civil magiſtrate for their protector and head; but if, in this caſe, he ſhould compel their aſſent to his own opinions, would it not be thought that, notwithſtanding their choice of the civil magiſtrate for their head, if they ſubmitted to his impoſitions, they ceaſed to be what they were before, and the ſociety changed its nature and character! In like manner, chriſtians act altogether out of character in chuſing a temporal head; and no perſon who has a juſt regard to his religion, and *the liberty wherewith Chriſt has made*

made him free, will ever acknowledge ſuch a dependence on the civil power.

Whenever, therefore, the civil magiſtrate, either in conſequence of becoming a member of the chriſtian church, by incorporating chriſtianity into his ſyſtem of civil policy, or by being choſen ſupreme head of the church in a chriſtian nation, introduces into the goſpel ſuch laws and ſanctions as are evidently unſuitable to the nature of it; as, for inſtance, when, inſtead of voluntary contributions to the church ſtock, he appoints the compulſory payment of dues; and when, for exhortation and reproof, he ſubſtitutes fines and confiſcations, torture and death; this new modelled ſcheme cannot be called chriſtianity. Thus when the poor in England became intitled to a legal maintenance, charity, on which they before ſubſiſted, was ſo far precluded; for a man who now pays a poor rate is not to be ranked with him who *gives alms of that which he poſſeſſes*. In all caſes a change in the fundamental maxims of government, eſpecially a change both in the laws themſelves, and in the ſanctions of them, cannot be deemed leſs than a change in the conſtitution.

For my own part, I can conceive no method whatever, in which the civil magiſtrate can be inveſted with eccleſiaſtical power, or eccleſiaſtics with

with civil power, ſo that a conſcientious chriſtian ſhall conſider himſelf as under any obligation to yield them obedience in their new character. In civil matters he will obey the civil magiſtrate, and where religion is concerned, he will liſten to nothing but the dictates of his own conſcience, or the admonitions of his choſen ſpiritual guide; and to him no farther than he is ſatisfied he has a better authority than his own for what he ſays. However they agree to change or mix their powers, their alliance and ſtipulations will have no weight with him. He will ſtill *give to Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's, and unto God the things that are God's*; and he will judge for himſelf, what are the things that are due to the one or the other. If he ſhould make any miſtake in this caſe, it will be ſome apology for him, that his ſuperiors had confounded his underſtanding, by the unnatural mixture they had made of things of ſuch different natures.

SECTION III.

Preſumptive evidences, from the ſcriptures, concerning the extent of eccleſiaſtical authority, and the power of the civil magiſtrate in matters of religion.

HAD there been ſuch a connection between eccleſiaſtical and civil matters, as the advocates for church power contend for; had it been the proper office of the civil magiſtrate to ſuperintend the affairs of religion, and had it been unlawful, as ſome aſſert, for private perſons to attempt any alteration in it, except by application to the civil governor; is it not unaccountable, that our Lord, and his apoſtles, did not make their firſt propoſals to the ſupreme magiſtrates among the Jews or Romans? They certainly had no idea of the peculiar obligation of magiſtrates to attend to this buſineſs, and chuſe a religion for the people, ſince we never hear of their making application to them on any ſuch account. It was their conſtant cuſtom to preach the goſpel wherever they came, in all companies, and to all perſons promiſcuouſly; and almoſt all the intercourſe they had with

magiſtrates, ſeems to have been on occaſion of their being brought before them as criminals.

Our Lord ſent out, both his twelve apoſtles, and alſo ſeventy diſciples, among all the cities of Iſrael, but we do not read of his ſending any deputation to the rulers of the Jews. John the Baptiſt ſeems to have confined his preaching to the wilderneſs of Judea, and the territory in the neighbourhood of the river Jordan; where he gave his exhortations to all that came to hear him, without diſtinction of perſons. St. Paul, indeed, made an appeal to Cæſar, but it was in order to obtain his liberty in an unjuſt proſecution. We are not informed that he, or any of the apoſtles, ever took any meaſures to lay the evidences of the chriſtian religion before the Roman emperor, or the Roman ſenate, in order to convince them of the truth and excellency of it, and induce them to aboliſh heatheniſm, in favour of it, throughout the Roman empire; which many perſons would now think to have been the readieſt, the moſt proper, and the beſt method of chriſtianizing the world. On the contrary, their whole conduct ſhows, that they conſidered religion as the proper and immediate concern of every ſingle perſon, and that there was no occaſion whatever to conſult, or adviſe with any earthly ſuperior in a caſe of this nature.

If

If magiſtrates had a right to chuſe a mode of religion for their people, much more, one would think, had *maſters* a right to chuſe for their *ſlaves* in this caſe; yet we find great numbers of converts were made amongſt this moſt dependent part of mankind, without any account of their maſters being conſulted, or applied to about it. The contrary is clearly inferred, from the firſt view of things, in primitive times.

Though it be true, that we muſt not expect to find in the ſcriptures an accurate account of every thing belonging to a chriſtian church, including a minute deſcription of the rank and power of its officers, it does not therefore follow, that it is not worth our while to conſult them on this ſubject; for we ſhall find ſuch a general view of the mutual relations, and reciprocal duties of chriſtians, as may prevent our making any conſiderable miſtake, with reſpect to the authority of ſome, or the ſubjection of others.

It cannot be inferred from any thing that our Saviour has delivered, that any one chriſtian has a right authoritatively to dictate or preſcribe to another, but I think the very contrary, if it be in the power of words to convey ſuch a meaning. When his diſciples were diſputing about power and precedency, he ſaid to

them, Matt. xxiii. 8. *Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Maſter, even Chriſt, and all ye are brethren; and call no man your Father upon earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called Maſter, for one is your Maſter, even Chriſt; but he that is greateſt among you, ſhall be your ſervant, &c.* Mark x. 42. *Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exerciſe lordſhip over them; and their great ones exerciſe authority upon them; but ſo ſhall it not be among you; but whoſoever will be great among you, ſhall be your miniſter, and whoſoever of you will be chiefeſt, ſhall be ſervant of all.* If it may be ſuppoſed that our Lord, in this diſcourſe, had in view our good father the Pope (notwithſtanding his affected title of the *ſervant of the ſervants of God)* or our *reverend*, and *right reverend fathers in God*, the biſhops and archbiſhops of England, ſhould we imagine that it was with approbation of thoſe pompous diſtinctions, and of the power annexed to their offices, or the contrary?

If we conſider the plan of the primitive church, we ſhall ſee that it was evidently formed upon that of the Jewiſh ſynagogue; in which the *elders* (all of whom promiſcuouſly inſtructed the reſt) were perſons of the greateſt age and experience, and he that is called the *ruler of the ſynagogue* (to which the office of the chriſtian *biſhop*

cor-

correſponds) was only one of them, diſtinguiſhed, indeed, by ſome titles of honour, but with no ſuperior power worth mentioning. This is the reaſon why both the rulers of the ſynagogues among the Jews, and biſhops in chriſtian churches, are generally called elders, in common with the reſt. The office of deacon was alſo the ſame in both, and needs no deſcription in this place.

Let us now examine what St. Paul, and the other apoſtles, ſay concerning the authority of theſe elders, or miniſters in the chriſtian church; and ſee whether it conveys the idea of any more power than that of an elder in a Jewiſh ſynagogue, in order to judge whether Dr. Balguy's text, Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves, for they watch for your ſouls*, can be fairly conſtrued to imply a greater degree of deference than is naturally due to perſons of greater age, knowledge, and experience than ourſelves. If we do not thus compare one text of ſcripture with another, and bring together the diſtant paſſages that relate to the ſame ſubject, we ſhall be betrayed into the groſſeſt errors. Without this method, even the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation might be an eaſy and natural miſtake, for what elſe is conveyed in the literal meaning of the words, *This is my body.*

Timothy ſeems to have been a perſon entruſted by St. Paul with the ſuperintendency of ſeveral churches; at leaſt, it may be preſumed, that his authority was not leſs than that of any chriſtian miniſter at this day, how dignified ſoever; and yet we ſhould not, from St. Paul's letters to him, form any very high idea of it, or that of the elders, or *biſhops*, concerning whom he gives his directions, 1 Tim. v. 1. *Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father*, the *younger men as brethren*, the *elder women as mothers*, the *younger as ſiſters, with all purity.* V. 17. *Let elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, eſpecially they who labour in the word and doctrine.* Here one may obſerve, that the honour theſe elders were intitled to, ſeems to have depended upon their behaviour, and nothing is ſaid of the honour they might claim when they did not behave well. 2 Tim. ii. 24. *The ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves.* It is not, I imagine, from this text, that the Engliſh clergy derive their right to go to law with their pariſhioners, and to *diſtrain* their goods for the payment of their dues. But this, and much more, is eaſily comprehended in 1 Cor. xiv. 40. *Let every thing be done decently, and in order.*

2 Tim. iv. ii. *Preach the word, be inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-ſuffering and doctrine.* Perhaps the firſt idea of the lawfulneſs of *non-reſidence* and *pluralities* might be got from this text, if not from that which the Doctor has choſen; for ſouls are ſufficiently *watched over*, by employing a curate, with as ſmall a ſalary as poſſible, to *do duty* for them. Indeed the ſmallneſs of the ſalary is an advantage in this reſpect, for this circumſtance obliges the curate to be more attentive to his flock, in order to get from them that ſubſiſtence, which his employer withholds from him.

The apoſtles always repreſent themſelves as appointed witneſſes of the life, ſufferings, and reſurrection of Chriſt; but, in other reſpects, ſeem not to have arrogated any dominion over the faith of their fellow chriſtians. 1 Cor. i. 24. *Not that we have dominion over your faith; but are helpers of your joy.* This, indeed, is an obſcure text, and therefore I will not ſay that it may not have convinced ſome perſons of the neceſſity of particular *confeſſions of faith*, and the enforcing of *ſubſcription* to them.

This great apoſtle St. Paul, when he was taking leave of the elders of Epheſus, and foreſaw, Acts xx. 29. that, after his departure, *grievous*

grievous wolves would enter in among them, not ſparing the flock, and alſo that of themſelves ſome would ariſe, ſpeaking perverſe things, to draw away diſciples after them; would certainly exhort them to employ all the *power of their office*, to prevent this growth of hereſy and ſchiſm, and to put a ſtop to the devaſtation that would be made in the church thereby. Let us then ſee what it amounts to, ver. 28. *Take heed, therefore, to yourſelves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghoſt has made you overſeers, to feed the church of God.* Again, ver. 31. *Therefore watch, and remember that by the ſpace of three years I ceaſed not to warn every one, night and day with tears.* Here the apoſtle recommends his own example to them in the caſe, and, according to his own account, it conſiſted wholly in *earneſtly warning* people. The following verſes contain ſo perfect a deſcription of a modern dignitary in the church, that I cannot help continuing the quotation, ver. 33, &c. *I have coveted no man's ſilver or gold or apparel; yea ye yourſelves know, that theſe hands have miniſtered to my neceſſities, and to them that were with me. And I ſhewed you all things, how that, ſo labouring, ye ought to ſupport the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid, it is more bleſſed to give, than to receive.*

Let

Let us now ſee in what light St. Peter repreſents himſelf, and the elders to whom he writes, 1 Pet. v. 1, &c. *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am alſo an elder, and a witneſs of the ſufferings of Chriſt. Feed the flock which is among you, taking the overſight thereof, not of conſtraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being enſamples to the flock. Likewiſe ye younger ſubmit unto the elder. Yea all of you be ſubject one to another, and be cloathed with humility.*

It is obſervable that the apoſtle Peter, in this place, and alſo John in his epiſtles, chuſes to call himſelf an elder. So far were the apoſtles from aſſuming any authority over their brethren, or peremptorily enjoining any thing of themſelves, except they were authorized to do it by the immediate direction of the Holy Ghoſt, that they virtually diſclaimed all ſuch power; and when their advice was not taken, and their deſigns obſtructed, they write as perſons who had nothing but reaſon on their ſide, without dictating, or giving themſelves ſuch airs as modern dignitaries in the church would aſſume in caſe of ſuch oppoſition.

SECTION IV.

Of the neceſſity, or utility, of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments.

THE friends and advocates for church power, generally found their ſyſtem on the neceſſity of eſtabliſhing ſome religion or other, agreeably, they ſay, to the cuſtom of all wiſe nations. This being admitted, it was evident, they think, that the ſupreme civil magiſtrate muſt have the choice of this religion, and being thus lodged in the hands of the chief magiſtrate, it is eaſily and effectually guarded. Thus the propriety of a moſt rigid intolerance, and the moſt abject paſſive obedience are preſently, and clearly inferred; ſo that the people have no right to relieve themſelves from eccleſiaſtical oppreſſions, except by petition to their temporal and ſpiritual governors, whoſe intereſt it generally is to continue every abuſe that the people can complain of.

But before this admirably connected ſyſtem can be admitted, a few things ſhould be previouſly conſidered. And I am aware that, if they had been duly attended to, the ſyſtem either would

would never have taken place, or it would have been ſo moderated, when put into execution, as that it would never have been worth the while of its advocates to contend ſo zealouſly for it.

1. All the rational plea for eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, is founded on the neceſſity of them, in order to enforce obedience to civil laws; but though religious conſiderations be allowed to be an excellent *aid* to civil ſanctions, it will not, therefore, follow, as ſome would gladly have it underſtood, that, therefore, the buſineſs of civil government could not have been carried on *at all* without them. I do not know how it is, that this poſition ſeems, in general, to have paſſed without diſpute or examination; but, for my own part, I ſee no reaſon to think that civil ſociety could not have ſubſiſted, and even have ſubſiſted very well, without the aid of any foreign ſanctions. I am even ſatisfied that, in many countries, the junction of civil and eccleſiaſtical powers have done much miſchief, and that it would have been a great bleſſing to the bulk of the people, if their magiſtrates had never interfered in matters of religion at all, but had left them to provide for themſelves in that reſpect, as they do with regard to medicine.

" There

"There are," ſays the biſhop of Glouceſter,* "a numerous ſet of duties of *imperfect obligation*, "which human laws could not reach. This "can only be done by an eccleſiaſtical juriſdic- "tion, intruſted by the ſtate with coercive power. "And indeed the ſupplying that defect, which "theſe courts do ſupply, was the original and "fundamental motive of the ſtate ſeeking this "alliance." But I would aſk, Are not eccleſiaſtical officers *men*, mere human beings, poſſeſſed of only a limited power of diſcernment, as well as civil officers? Will they not, therefore, find themſelves under the ſame difficulty in enforcing the duties of imperfect obligation, that the civil officers would have done, notwithſtanding the coercive power they receive from the ſtate for that purpoſe? In ſhort, I do not ſee what an eccleſiaſtical court can do in this caſe, more than a civil court of equity. Is not this, in fact, confeſſed by this author, when he allows, page 87, that "there muſt be "an appeal from theſe courts to the civil, in all "caſes." For, if the civil courts be qualified to judge of theſe things, by appeal, why could they not have done it in the firſt inſtance?

2. If the expediency of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments be allowed, it is allowed on account of

* Alliance, p. 81.

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their *utility* only; and therefore, as there are infinite differences in the coercive power of these eſtabliſhments, this reaſon will not juſtify their being carried to a greater extent than the good of ſociety requires. And though it may be productive of, or, at leaſt, conſiſtent with the good of ſociety, that the civil magiſtrate ſhould give ſome degree of countenance to the profeſſors of one ſect of religion (which, with me, however, is extremely problematical) it were a groſs perverſion of all reaſoning and common ſenſe, to infer from thence, that the people ſhould not have free liberty to diſſent from this religion of their civil governor, or even to uſe any honeſt and fair method of gaining converts to what they ſhould think to be the truth. Becauſe whatever utility there may be in *eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments*, there is certainly utility in *truth*, eſpecially moral and religious truth; and truth can never have a fair chance of being diſcovered, or propagated, without the moſt perfect freedom of inquiry and debate.

3. Though it may be true, that there never was any country without ſome national religion, it is not true that theſe religions were always adopted with a view to aid the civil government. It appears to me that, with reſpect to the ſtates of Greece, and other barbarous nations (for the Greeks were no better than their neighbours

bours in this reſpect) motives of a very different nature from theſe; motives derived from nothing but the moſt blind and abject ſuperſtition, and the moſt groundleſs apprehenſions, were thoſe that really induced them to make ſuch rigid proviſion for the perpetuity of their ſeveral religions. Their laws have not, in fact, any ſuch intermixture of civil and religious matters, as is now found in the ſyſtems of European ſtates. We do not find in them, that duties properly religious are enforced by civil ſanctions, nor duties properly civil enforced by religious ones, in the ſenſes in which we now uſe thoſe terms, as if theſe things had, naturally, ſo neceſſary a connection. But in theſe ignorant and ſuperſtitious ages, men fancied there was what we ſhould call an *arbitrary connection* between the obſervance of certain religious rites, and the continuance of certain ſtates; and that the gods, who were particularly attentive to their preſervation, would withdraw their protecttion, upon the diſuſe of thoſe ceremonies.

The Biſhop of Glouceſter ſeems to agree with me in this, for he ſays, * "The unity of the "object of faith, and conformity to a formulary of "dogmatick theology, as the terms of commu-"nion, is the great foundation and bond of

* Alliance, p. 99.

"religious

" religious ſociety. Now this the ſeveral ſo-
" cieties of pagan religion wanted, in which
" there was only a conformity in national cere-
" monies."

Had the antient heathens entertained any ſuch notion of the *direct* ſubſerviency of religion to civil policy *(i. e.* in a *moral view)* as the advocates for church power endeavour to avail themſelves of at this day, they would have made a diſtinction among religions. Whereas, it is plain they had no idea of the excellence of one mode of religion above another, as more conducive to the happineſs of mankind (unleſs there was ſomething peculiarly ſhocking in ſome of their rites, as that of ſacrificing human victims) but they imagined that different rites, rites differing not in moral excellence, but in mere form, were neceſſary for different ſtates; and that it was wrong, and hazardous, for two nations to interchange their religions.

Indeed, after theſe eſtabliſhments had taken place, it is probable that ſome of the defenders of them, in ranſacking their imaginations for arguments, might hit upon ſome ſuch reaſons as modern high churchmen have urged; but it no more follows from thence, that the eſtabliſhments were originally founded on thoſe principles, than that becauſe plauſible reaſons may

may (for any thing I know) be alledged for the uſe of a *white ſurplice* in reading the prayers of the church, and for biſhops wearing *mitres* and *lawn ſleeves*, that, therefore, Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles uſed them; and I cannot help fancying, that theſe things would excite pretty much the ſame ſenſations in them, that they do in me.

4. Though there may be no chriſtian country in which ſome ſpecies of chriſtianity is not, more or leſs, eſtabliſhed, *i. e.* more or leſs favoured by the government; yet there are countries in which leſs favour is ſhown to the prevailing mode than in others, and in which much leſs care is taken to guard it, as in Holland, Ruſſia, Penſilvania, and I believe others of our American colonies. Now, let an inquiry be made into the ſtate of theſe countries, and ſee whether the reſult of it will be favourable, or unfavourable to eſtabliſhments. What *tendency to inconvenience* has there been obſerved in thoſe ſtates in which church government is moſt relaxed, and what *ſuperior advantages*, in point of real happineſs, are enjoyed in thoſe countries in which it is ſtrained to the higheſt pitch. I have no doubt of the reſult of ſuch an inquiry turning out greatly in favour of the relaxation of religious eſtabliſhments, if not of their total ſuppreſſion. A juſt view of all the real evils that attend the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment in England, with re-

ſpect to *knowledge*, *virtue*, *commerce*, and many other things with which the happineſs of ſtates is connected, but more eſpecially with reſpect to *liberty*, would be ſufficient to deter any new legiſlator from introducing any thing like it into a new ſtate; unleſs, without thinking at all, he took it for granted that there was no doing without one, or was ſo weak as to be frighted by the mere clamour of bigots.

5. Though it may be true, that inconvenience would ariſe from the immediate ſuppreſſion of religious eſtabliſhments, it doth not therefore follow, that they were either neceſſary or expedient; that the nation would have been in a worſe ſtate if they had never exiſted; and that no meaſures ought to be taken to relax or diſſolve them. Were the religion of Mahomet aboliſhed every where at once, no doubt much confuſion would be occaſioned, yet what chriſtian would, for that reaſon, wiſh for the perpetuity of that ſuperſtition? The ſame may be ſaid of popery, and many other kinds of corrupt religion. Cuſtoms, of whatever kind, that have prevailed ſo long as to have influenced the genius and manners of a whole nation, cannot be changed without trouble. Such a ſhock to men's prejudices would neceſſarily give them pain, and unhinge them for a time. It is the ſame with vicious habits of the body, which ter-

minate in diſeaſes and death; but muſt they be indulged, and the fatal conſequences calmly expected, becauſe the patient would find it painful and difficult to alter his method of living? Eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, therefore, may be a real *evil*, and a diſeaſe in civil ſociety, and a dangerous one too, notwithſtanding the arguments for the ſupport of them, derived from the confuſion and inconvenience attending their diſſolution; ſo far is this conſideration from proving them to be things excellent or uſeful in themſelves.

Even the miſchiefs that might be apprehended from attempts to amend or diſſolve eſtabliſhments, are much aggravated by writers. Much leſs oppoſition, I am perſuaded, would ariſe from the ſource of real *bigotry*, than from the quarter of *intereſt*, and the bigotry that was ſet in motion by perſons who were not themſelves bigots.

It is imagined by ſome, that chriſtianity could not have ſubſiſted without the aid of the civil powers, and that the diſſolution of its eſtabliſhment would endanger its very being. The Biſhop of Glouceſter ſays, that "the ſtate was "induced to ſeek an alliance with the church, "as the neceſſary means of preſerving the being

"of

"of religion;" * and that "all the advantage "the church expects from the alliance with "the ſtate, can be no other than ſecurity from "all outward violence;" † "it being imper-"tinent," as he juſtly obſerves, ‡ "in the church "to aim at riches, honours, and power; be-"cauſe theſe are things which, as a church, ſhe "can neither uſe, nor receive profit from." He alſo ſays, § "that religion could not operate "for want of a common arbiter, who had im-"partiality to apply the rule of right, and power "to enforce its operations." But theſe perſons ſeem not to be acquainted with its proper *internal ſtrength*, or they would not lay ſo much ſtreſs on ſuch poor and heterogeneous ſupports. They ſhould conſider how the chriſtian religion was ſupported, without the help of any eſtabliſhment, before the time of Conſtantine. Is it not true, in fact, that it not only ſubſiſted, but amazingly increaſed in all that period; when it was ſo far from being protected by civil authority, that all human powers were combined againſt it?

If they ſay it was ſupported by miracles in all that interval, it behoves them to make good the aſſertion. On the contrary, it appears from church hiſtory, that when chriſtianity was once eſtabliſhed (if I may uſe that term) by the

* Alliance, p. 59. † Ib. p. 67. ‡ Ib. p. 69.
§ Ib. p. 5.

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* Alliance, p. 59. † Ib. p. 67. ‡ Ib. p. 69.
§ Ib. p. 5.

preaching and miracles of the apoſtles, it was able afterwards to ſupport itſelf by its own evidence. And this evidence is ſtill ſufficient to ſupport it, though all the powers on earth, and the gates of hell, were combined againſt it. Certainly thoſe who make uſe of this plea for chriſtian eſtabliſhments ſeem to inſinuate, that chriſtianity is deſtitute of *ſufficient evidence*; and could not advance any thing more favourable to the purpoſe of its moſt inveterate enemies.

One circumſtance in favour of my argument is very evident. If the ſupport of chriſtianity had not been piouſly undertaken by Conſtantine, and the ſucceeding Roman emperors, the Popiſh hierarchy, that great *myſtery of iniquity*, and *abomination*, could never have exiſted. And I think, all the advocates for church power, will not be able to mention any evil attending the want of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, equal to this, which flowed from one.

All other eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments among chriſtians, partake more or leſs of the nature of this, the firſt and greateſt of them, being nothing more than corrections and emendations of it. Many of the abuſes in it have been rectified, but many of them, alſo, are retained in them all. That there are ſome things good and uſeful in them all is true, but it is no difficult matter to point out many things that are good

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(that is, which have been attended with conſequences beneficial to mankind) in the groſſeſt abuſes of popery. Thoſe who ſtudy hiſtory cannot fail to be acquainted with them, and there is no occaſion to point them out in this place.

Thanks to the excellent conſtitution of things, that there is no acknowledged evil in the whole courſe of nature, or providence, that is without a beneficial operation, ſufficient to juſtify the appointment or permiſſion of it, by that great and good Being who made, and who ſuperintends all things. But becauſe tempeſts by land and ſea, poiſonous plants and animals, &c. do good, conſidered as parts of the whole ſyſtem; and becauſe it certainly ſeems better in the ſight of God, that they ſhould exiſt than not, muſt we not, therefore, guard againſt their pernicious effects to ourſelves.

Let this be applied to the caſe of civil and eccleſiaſtical tyranny in every form. The Divine Being, for wiſe and good ends, permits them; but he has given us a power to oppoſe them, and to guard ourſelves againſt them. And we need not doubt, but that things will be ſo guided by his unſeen hand, that the good they were intended to anſwer will be anſwered, notwithſtanding our juſt oppoſition; or will appear to *have been* anſwered, if we ſucceed in

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putting a final end to them. He makes uſe of men, as his inſtruments, both in eſtabliſhing, and removing all theſe abuſes, in civil and eccleſiaſtical government.

SECTION V.

A review of ſome particular poſitions in Dr. Balguy's *ſermon, and his manner of reaſoning on the ſubject of church-authority.*

THE principal of the conſiderations mentioned in the preceding ſections were ſuggeſted by the peruſal of Dr. Balguy's ſermons; and, I flatter myſelf, are ſufficient to refute any arguments that he has produced in favour of *church-authority*. I ſhall, however, juſt diſcant upon a few paſſages in his performance, where we diſcover the great hinges on which his whole ſcheme turns.

"Not only," ſays he, p. 8. "muſt perſons "be appointed for the performance of religious "duties, but the manner alſo is to be preſcribed. "The aſſembly may not unfrequently be de- "ceived in their choice, and the miniſters, if "ſubject to no reſtraint, may introduce princi- "ples and practices which the people condemn.

"Or

"Or it may happen that one miniſter ſhall pur-
"ſue a different plan from another, perhaps a
"contrary plan; which muſt evidently tend to
"confound the minds of the people, and wea-
"ken the impreſſions of religion. If the dif-
"ference be not in form only, but in doctrine,
"the caſe will ſtill be worſe; for nothing is
"ſo apt to root out all religion, both from
"men's heads, and hearts, as religious contro-
"verſy. Here then," ſays he, "we have the
"firſt ſketch of what may be called, not im-
"properly, *church-authority*."

As the inconveniences ariſing from the want of church-authority are here referred to, as the reaſon for eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, let us briefly examine whether they are not much exaggerated by this author, and, on the other hand, juſt point out a few of the inconveniences attending eſtabliſhments, which he has not ſo much as hinted at, that the one may be fairly weighed againſt the other. In this I ſhall not content myſelf with mere *theory*, as Dr. Balguy does, ſince there are known *facts* to refer to, as examples in both caſes.

Among us Diſſenters, if a miniſter introduce principles and practices which the people condemn, they diſmiſs him from their ſervice, and chuſe another more agreeable to them. If his dif-

difference of ſentiment occaſion any debate, the ſubject of the debate is thereby more thoroughly underſtood; and the worſt that can happen is, that ſome of them ſeparate, and form themſelves into a new ſociety, or join another in their neighbourhood, that is more to their liking. In this, as in all other conteſts, ſome ill blood is produced, the effects of which may remain for ſome time; but the minds of the people in general are not ſo much confounded, nor the impreſſions of religion, as a principle of moral conduct, ſo much weakened as this writer imagines.

Among Diſſenters, church emoluments are not worth contending for, and therefore thoſe fierce conteſts *about* places, or *in* places, but ſeldom happen. A miniſter ſeldom chuſes to be connected with a ſociety whoſe general ſentiments are much different from his own, nor do ſocieties often invite a perſon to officiate among them without having previouſly ſufficient reaſon to depend upon his being agreeable to them. Upon the whole, I am willing to appeal to any perſon who is well acquainted with the ſtate of Diſſenters in England, whether diſagreeable events happen ſo often, or whether the worſt effects are of ſo much conſequence, as to bear being put in the ballance with the capital advantages of our ſituation, for improving in religious knowledge and virtue.

Some-

Something of the ſpirit of controverſy ſeems neceſſary to keep up men's attention to the ſubject of religion in general, as well as to other ſubjects; and, notwithſtanding a fondneſs for debate may be of ſome diſſervice to practical religion, it is far leſs ſo than a total inattention to the ſubject. In theological and ſcriptural inquiries, the *practical* truths of chriſtianity muſt neceſſarily preſent themſelves to the mind. Beſides there is hardly any branch of chriſtian knowledge but is more or leſs of a practical nature, and ſuggeſts conſiderations that are of uſe to mend the heart and reform the life. Religious knowledge is, however, itſelf, as valuable an acquiſition as knowledge of any other kind; and I think it will not be denied, that Diſſenters, both clergy and laity, in proportion to their numbers, far excel the clergy and laity of the eſtabliſhed church in religious and ſcriptural knowledge. The ſenſible and ingenious men amongſt the clergy are, in general, any thing but *divines*; and the ignorance of the laity, eſpecially where there are no Diſſenters, is deplorable, and almoſt beyond belief.

Some may think it an unhappineſs that the common people ſhould be ſo knowing in matters of religion. But this complaint is to be conſidered in the ſame light with the complaint of ſtateſmen, in free countries, of the common people troubling themſelves ſo much about *politics*; while the

the friend of his country and of mankind will not, upon the whole, be diſpleaſed with either of theſe circumſtances; being ſenſible, that the one is ſome guard againſt the incroachments of civil, and the other of eccleſiaſtical tyranny.

As to the confuſion that is occaſioned in congregations, when they happen to be diſſatisfied with their miniſters, it is not to be compared, for its pernicious effects, to the almoſt perpetual ſquabbles, between the eſtabliſhed clergy and their pariſhioners, about *tythes*. Few pariſhes in the country are without diſputes upon this ſubject, which create a ſtanding oppoſition of intereſt between the people and their ſpiritual guides. It is hardly poſſible to be acquainted with clergymen, and not be ſenſible of this ſtate of things among them: for diſcourſe about *tythes*, *modus's*, *&c.* makes as great a figure in their common converſation as the ſtocks, and the news that affect them do in that of a broker, or of a man whoſe whole fortune is lodged in the public funds.

Laſtly, What inconvenience can be pointed out, as having actually taken place among Diſſenters, for want of a ſtanding *confeſſion of faith*, that can be named with the dreadful miſchiefs that have ariſen from enforcing them in the church of England. Theſe things preclude all

free

free inquiry upon ſubjects of religion, and entail every error and abuſe from generation to generation, ſo that a reformation can hardly take place without violence and blood.

If the emoluments of church livings be conſiderable, the temptation to prevaricate with conſcience is, by this means, made too ſtrong for the generality of men, who have been educated for the church, and who are now incapable of getting their bread, at leaſt, of making their fortune, in any other way. Alſo, what muſt the people think, to ſee theſe who are appointed to inſtruct them in the principles of religion and morality, ſolemnly ſubſcribing to articles of faith which they are known to diſbelieve and abhor; and who among the clergy, that read and think at all, are ſuppoſed to believe one-third of the thirty-nine articles of the church of England. I have ſo good an opinion of Dr. Balguy's good ſenſe, notwithſtanding the futility of his reaſoning in this performance, as to think it is a thouſand to one, but that he himſelf is an unbeliever in many of them.

One would have thought that the ſhocking abuſes of the church of Rome might have ſerved as a ſtanding monument of the danger of church eſtabliſhments; when that *myſtery of iniquity* ſtands upon record, as having got thereby,

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ſo firm a footing, as for ſo many ages, to have ſet all the civil powers of Europe, and all the powers of reaſon too, at defiance.

Having ſeen what this author has been able to advance in favour of the neceſſity of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, and church-authority, I ſhall follow him a little farther, and obſerve what he has to alledge for bringing a number of chriſtian ſocieties into one common ſyſtem, in order to lay a broader and firmer foundation for the power of the church. From this combination he expects, p. 11, 12. more *wiſdom*, and *uniformity*, a greater *variety* of *candidates* for church officers, and *a better choice* of them. "Theſe ſocieties," he well obſerves, "muſt "neceſſarily act by deputies, ſo that, at leaſt, "either ſingle men, or ſmall bodies of men, "muſt be authorized to govern the church. "There is no neceſſity," ſays he, "that the "miniſters of religion ſhould be appointed by "the people, and much expedience in a differ-"ent method of appointment."

To me, all this appears mere imagination, and the ſuppoſed advantages of this elaborate ſcheme to be altogether contrary to fact. I ſhould much ſooner have imagined there might be much expedience in town officers not being choſen by their townſmen, than in the miniſters of

of a chriſtian church not being choſen by the congregation.

The nomination to church livings, except by the members of the church themſelves, is a thing ſo abſurd, that the idea of it never occurred for many centuries in the chriſtian world; and we may venture to ſay, that it never could have entered into the head of any man, had not the revenues of the church grown ſo conſiderable, as to become worth the notice of the civil magiſtrate, who took advantage of them to oblige his creatures and dependents. The fruits of this method of proceeding are ſuch as might have been expected from the manner of its introduction. The people belonging to the eſtabliſhed church, are like the *vaſſals* of the Poliſh nobility, or the mere *live ſtock* of a farm, delivered over, as *parcel of the eſtate*, to every ſucceſſive incumbent. The people have not the idea of the happineſs of being bleſſed with the paſtor of their choice and affection, that the Diſſenters have.

As to the wiſdom of choice among candidates for the miniſtry, we ſee, in fact, that the intereſt of the people is not at all conſidered in it. The ſame intereſt is openly made for *church livings* as for places, or emoluments of any other kind; and being procured by the ſame means, they are enjoyed in the ſame manner, without any

any idea of obligation to the people from whom their revenue ariſes.

What reaſon there is, or would be, to boaſt of the happy effects of uniformity in a great *number of ſocieties*, comprehending a whole kingdom, or the whole chriſtian world, we may judge from the horrible evils, before recited, that attend the neceſſary methods of enforcing this uniformity in a ſingle ſociety; for theſe muſt be multiplied in proportion to the number. We ſee, in fact, much more good than harm is found to reſult from the diverſities in diſſenting congregations. They are extremely favourable to the advancement of religious knowledge, and they afford a fine opportunity for the exerciſe of chriſtian candour and charity, the very poſſibility of which would be excluded in, what Dr. Balguy would call, a complete and perfect eſtabliſhment. Some inconveniences cannot fail to ariſe from the moſt favourable ſituation of things; but in this ſtate of trial, the Divine Being has not provided for the prevention of vice by cutting off all occaſions of virtue.

Beſides, ſo wiſe is the conſtitution of human nature, that differences of opinion cannot be prevented by any human means. It is labour in vain to attempt it. It is our wiſdom, therefore, not to irritate one another by oppoſition, but

but to derive every advantage we poſſibly can from a circumſtance that will neceſſarily take place. There is as much diverſity of ſentiment, and conſequent animoſity in the church of England (as far as the members of it think for themſelves at all) and even in the church of Rome, (notwithſtanding the infallibility they pretend to in the deciſion of controverſies) as among us Diſſenters, but without the advantage which we derive from this ſituation, of unconfined freedom of debate, and not having our inquiries reſtricted within certain limits only.

"We have now ſeen," ſays this author, p. 13. "on what principles the authority of a religious "community, both over the miniſters, and "members of particular congregations, may be "ſecurely maintained, whether reſiding in the "community at large, or delegated to ſome "certain perſons." We ſhall now examine in what manner he would join the authority of the civil magiſtrate to this ſyſtem of church authority. Here, as he is wandering ſtill farther from the ſimplicity of the goſpel, we may naturally expect more wildneſs in his ſuppoſitions, and greater confuſion in his reaſoning.

"Becauſe we ſee," ſays he, p. 14. "by the "hiſtory of all ages, that religion, in the hands "of ſelfiſh and factious men, is a very danger-

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" ous inſtrument; it, therefore, greatly concerns " the public peace and ſafety, that all church- " authority ſhould be under the controll of the " civil governor; that religious aſſemblies, as well " as others, ſhould be ſubject to his inſpection, " and bound by ſuch rules as he ſhall ſee fit to " impoſe. The moſt effectual method of ob- " taining this ſecurity, is to inveſt the ſupreme " power, civil and eccleſiaſtical, in the ſame " perſon. There are, indeed, good reaſons why " the offices of religion ought not to be admi- " niſtered by the magiſtrate. Both the edu- " cation of his youth, and the attention of his " riper years, have been employed on very " different objects; and amidſt the numberleſs " toils and cares of government, it is impoſſible " he ſhould find leiſure for any inferior profeſ- " ſion."

P. 12. " To obtain completely the benefits " propoſed from this union of civil and eccleſi- " aſtical authority, all the members of the ſame " community ſhould be members alſo of the " ſame church; variety of ſects having a natural " tendency both to weaken the influence of " public religion, and to give diſturbance to the " public peace. Where this is impracticable, " not the *beſt*, but the *largeſt* ſect will naturally " demand the protection of the magiſtrate.

P. 19. "As miniſters, while employed by "public authority, are not at liberty to depart "from eſtabliſhed forms, or to aſſemble ſepa-"rate congregations; ſo neither are the people "at liberty, while they remain in ſociety, to "deſert at pleaſure, their lawful paſtors, and "flock in crowds to receive inſtruction from "thoſe who have no authority to give it. If "they cannot lawfully comply with the terms "of communion, let them make an open ſe-"paration. In vain do men unite in civil or "religious communities, if each individual is "to retain intire liberty of judging and acting "for himſelf."

Concerning the impropriety and abſurdity of making a civil magiſtrate the ſupreme head of a chriſtian church, I think enough has been advanced above. I ſhould, indeed, have thought that the ſame reaſons which this author gives, why the civil magiſtrate ſhould not be concerned in the *offices* of religion, might have made him, at leaſt, ſuſpect his qualifications for ſuperintending the whole buſineſs of religion, and directing all the officers in it. According to this maxim, a perſon might be very fit for the office of a biſhop, and eſpecially an archbiſhop, who was by no means qualified to be a common curate. But to prevent diſturbances, the civil magiſtrate muſt have ſecurity for the good be-

haviour of all his ſubjects, whatever be their religious perſuaſion; and, as he obſerves, the *moſt effectual* method (he does not ſay *the only ſufficient* method, though it be preciſely the thing that his argument requires) of obtaining this ſecurity is to inveſt the ſupreme power, civil and eccleſiaſtical, in the ſame perſon, be they ever ſo incompatible, and the ſame perſon ever ſo ill qualified to conduct them both.

But is not this, as I have hinted (in the parentheſis in the laſt paragraph) giving the civil magiſtrate much more power than, upon his own premiſes, is neceſſary? Is it not poſſible that all church-authority ſhould be *ſufficiently* under the controll of the civil government, and that religious aſſemblies, as well as others, ſhould be ſubject to his inſpection, and even be bound by many of his rules, ſo far as was neceſſary to prevent any breach of the publick peace, without inveſting him with ſupreme eccleſiaſtical power. For my own part, I ſhould have no objection to the preſence of an inſpector from the civil magiſtrate in a religious aſſembly, or the attendance of as many conſtables, or even ſoldiers, as might be judged neceſſary to keep the peace, upon all occaſions in which religion is concerned. And, if the civil magiſtrate be no more concerned in this buſineſs than the public peace and ſafety is concerned

cerned (and this writer himſelf does not ſo much as hint at any thing more) I ſhould think this might ſatisfy him. But both he, and the civil magiſtrate want much more than this, when he muſt needs paſs out of his proper character, and inſiſt upon being the ſupreme head of the church. The avowed object and end of the union of civil and eccleſiaſtical power will not juſtify this claim, for it may be compaſſed at a much leſs expence. If I want a houſe that will not be blown down by the wind, and two feet thickneſs in the wall will ſufficiently anſwer my purpoſe, ſhould I make it twenty feet thick, becauſe this would be a *more effectual*, or the *moſt effectual* ſecurity? A *ſufficient* ſecurity is enough for me.

The Doctor's reaſoning in this caſe, is of a piece with the obligation which he lays upon the magiſtrate to countenance the *largeſt* ſect of his diſcordant ſubjects, in preference to the *beſt*. This, indeed, might tend to reconcile the Diſſenters in his dominions to their ſituation, by conſidering that their magiſtrate himſelf, the ſupreme head of the eſtabliſhed church, could not command the religion of his choice any more than they could; for though he preſcribed to one part of his ſubjects, the other part of them dictated to him; and that he was under the diſ-

agreeable neceſſity of enacting the articles of a religion which he himſelf did not believe.

The Biſhop of Glouceſter too, Dr. Balguy's maſter in the ſcience of defence, ſays, that "the "ſtate muſt make an alliance with the *largeſt* "of the religious ſocieties."* I wiſh that either of theſe gentlemen, or any perſon for them, would tell us what ought to be the eſtabliſhed religion of Ireland on theſe principles. Certainly, not that of the church of England; for, if I be rightly informed, there are many pariſhes in that kingdom, in which the clergy of the eſtabliſhed church do no duty at all, becauſe they can find none of their pariſhioners who would attend their miniſtrations. Alſo, if I be rightly informed, many of the clergy even take pains to prevent the increaſe of their own ſect, leſt it ſhould be attended by the neceſſity of doing duty among them; whereas, at preſent, they can enjoy their revenues while their places are *fine-cures*. What a glorious revolution would it be for the church of England, if the diſſenting intereſt ſhould prevail ſo much in this country, as that the greateſt part of the eſtabliſhed churches here ſhould be fine-cures too. For ſtill, ſince none but members of the eſtabliſhed church could be members of parliament, they

* Alliance, p. 113.

would

would not need to be under any apprehenſion about the ſecurity of their livings. Had Conſtantine the Great been aware of the force of this reaſoning, though a chriſtian himſelf, he would have thought himſelf obliged to ſtrengthen the eſtabliſhment of the heathen worſhip, and to diſcountenance the profeſſion of chriſtianity in the Roman empire. For the ſame reaſon, alſo, a Proteſtant king of France would be obliged to continue the revocation of the edict of Nantz. It is really very difficult to animadvert upon ſuch poſitions as theſe, and retain one's gravity at the ſame time.

There is ſomething one cannot help ſmiling at in the reaſons which this author gives for the *legal maintenance* of chriſtian miniſters. "This "proviſion," he ſays, p. 16. "is of great im- "portance to them and the public, as we may "eaſily judge from the wretched and precarious "condition of thoſe who want it; a condition "which ſeldom fails to produce a ſlaviſh de- "pendence, highly unbecoming a public teacher, "and in ſome meaſure diſqualifying him for the "diſcharge of his office." I am afraid our Saviour and his apoſtles were not aware of this neceſſity of a legal maintenance for goſpel miniſters, or they would certainly have made ſome proviſion for it, or have left ſome inſtructions concerning it. But, perhaps, this was omitted by

by them, to prevent any reflection being caſt upon themſelves; for, according to this principle, they were but indifferently qualified for the diſcharge of their office. To be perfectly ſerious: If our Lord had imagined that any real advantage would have accrued to the miniſters of his goſpel from a legal proviſion, I do not ſee why we might not (either in his diſcourſes or parables) have expected ſome hint of it, and ſome recommendation of an alliance of his kingdom with thoſe of this world, in order to ſecure it to them. But no idea of ſuch policy as this can be collected from the New Teſtament. For my part, I wonder how any man can read it, and retain the idea of any ſuch worldly policy, ſo far am I from thinking it could have been collected from it.

Our Lord ſeems to have been ſo far from entering into the ſpirit of Dr. Balguy's reaſoning in this place, that he rather argues upon a contrary maxim. No doubt this writer thinks the clergy *deſerve* a liberal and legal maintenance; but it is remarkable, that our Lord uſes this very reaſon why his diſciples ſhould not concern themſelves about any proviſion at all; referring, I ſuppoſe, to the truſt they might reaſonably place in divine providence, which would not ſuffer the labourer to be without the hire that he deſerved of his employer. Matt. x. 1, &c.

Freely

Freely ye have received, freely give; provide neither gold, nor ſilver, nor braſs in your purſes, nor ſcrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither ſhoes, nor yet ſtaves; for the workman is worthy of his hire. It is true, that there was ſomething ſingular in the circumſtances of this particular miſſion of the apoſtles, but we cannot think that they were to act upon quite contrary maxims in their general miſſion afterwards. And I think a chriſtian miniſter, who has no proviſion independent of his people, and cannot ſue them for it at law, is in a ſituation to give a proof of the moſt truly *independent mind.*

It is true, that extreme anxiety about this world, and a ſlaviſh dependence upon a chriſtian ſociety, are very unbecoming a public teacher, and do tend to diſqualify him for a diſcharge of his office. But is there no other method of getting rid of this anxiety, and ſlaviſh dependence, without a *legal* claim upon a ſociety for our ſupport? A chriſtian miniſter may, certainly, be expected to imbibe the ſpirit of his religion, in a greater meaſure than thoſe who do not give ſo much of their attention to it; and this appears to me to be abundantly ſufficient to give a man ſuch a confidence in divine providence, and ſuch a ſuperiority of mind to this world, and all the things of it, as, at the ſame time that they inſpire an ardent zeal to promote the everlaſting

intereſts of mankind, will give a man a far greater firmneſs and intrepidity in the diſcharge of this important duty, than he can derive from a knowledge of his being able to compel his people, by law, to give him ſo much a year, whether he do his duty or not, and in caſe of refuſal to call in the civil power to ſupport his claim. Courage thus ſupported is real cowardice, and truly contemptible. They have not the ſpirit either of men or chriſtians, who, if they think at all, are not aſhamed of it.

Such a ſituation of miniſters and people, excludes the idea of generoſity on one ſide, and of gratitude on the other. It conſequently cuts off a great ſource of mutual affection to both; and, upon the whole, is, in a variety of reſpects, infinitely more unfavourable to the proper diſcharge of the miniſterial duty, than the condition of the apoſtles in the primitive times, and that of the Diſſenters at preſent, wretched and precarious as this author is pleaſed to think it. As to a *ſlaviſh dependence*, of which Dr. Balguy ſeems to entertain ſo great a dread, as well as of *the wretched and precarious condition* which he ſuppoſes to ariſe from it, I do not ſee how the idea of it could occur to any man who is conſcious that he *deſerves*, and therefore is, in juſtice and equity, *intitled* to what he receives for his ſupport, and does not ſubſiſt on mere charity. If I give my time and ſtudy to my people, I have

have all the claim that I wiſh to have for ſuch a proviſion as my circumſtances require, and as theirs enable them to give me; and I have no more idea of being in a ſtate of ſlaviſh dependence, than Dr. Balguy, who can claim his proviſion by law. As a chriſtian miniſter, I am far from envying him his boaſted advantage, even without conſidering *the price* that is often paid for it, a price which worlds cannot repay. If I were in a ſituation in which I could not obtain a ſufficient maintenance, as a recompence for my miniſterial labours, I ſhould, like St. Paul, prefer even *labouring with my hands* (if I had no more liberal employment to have recourſe to) rather than apply to the civil magiſtrate.

Upon the whole, when I conſider my ſituation as a miniſter of the goſpel, or a member of a chriſtian ſociety, I do not ſee what either the ſtate, or myſelf, could get by an *alliance*, admitting there was nothing unnatural, and abſurd in the idea of ſuch a connection. I want nothing that the ſtate can give me (except to be unmoleſted by it) for I want neither a *legal maintenance*, nor *power to enforce my admonitions*. I look upon both theſe things as unſuitable to, and deſtructive of, the proper ends of my miniſtry. And, without any hire from the civil powers, I ſhall think it my duty to do all I can towards making my hearers good ſubjects, by making them

them good men, and good chriſtians. I ſhall, therefore, never court any alliance with the ſtate; and ſhould the ſtate be ſo abſurd as to make any propoſals of alliance with me, I hope I ſhould have virtue enough to reject them with indignation, as Peter did the not very diſſimilar offer of Simon Magus. Let the men of this world, and the powers of this world know, that there are ſome things that cannot be purchaſed with *money*.

In the ſame ſpirit are this writer's reaſons for the difference of ranks among the clergy, and for a proviſion ſuitable to thoſe ranks. P. 16. "And will not the ſame reaſons ſerve pe- "culiarly to recommend thoſe forms of govern- "ment, in which the clergy, as well as the "laity, are diſtributed into different ranks, and "enabled to ſupport thoſe ranks in a becoming "manner; that both the lower orders may a- "void contempt, and the higher obtain diſ- "tinction and regard? Were all the miniſters "placed in low ſtations of life, it is eaſy to ſee "with what neglect they would be treated, and "with what prejudice their doctrine would be "received. Poverty, aukwardneſs, and igno- "rance of what is called the world, are diſad- "vantages, for which the higheſt attainments "in learning and virtue could never atone." No doubt, Chriſt and his apoſtles muſt have felt theſe diſadvantages, though they have not given any

any hint of it. Happy it is, however, that this important thought has occurred to this moſt excellent writer; and that ſeeing it was omitted in the New Teſtament, he has inſerted it in this canonical ſermon. Not to be miſunderſtood in this place, I ſhall add, that I have no objection to a *decent*, or, if Dr. Balguy pleaſes, a *liberal* ſupport for chriſtian miniſters, but I would not have it to be a *legal* one.

I ſhall cloſe my remarks on this writer's method of defending the eſtabliſhment, with repeating a trite obſervation, that there is, generally, both a *true*, and an *oſtenſible* reaſon for men's conduct, and that theſe are often very different from one another; becauſe I cannot help thinking, that it is verified in the caſe before us. The oſtenſible, and plauſible reaſons for church eſtabliſhments, are ſuch as this writer has repreſented, derived from the imaginary evils attending the want of them; but the true reaſon with reſpect to the miniſters, may be the ſcantineſs and uncertainty of their proviſion without them; and, with reſpect to the civil magiſtrate, the vaſt addition of influence he thereby acquires, in conſequence, both of having ſo many benefices at his diſpoſal, and likewiſe, of retaining in his pay the public inſtructors of the people; men, who being kept in continual expectation, by the exhibition of higher preferment

ment and greater emolument, will not fail to inculcate maxims the moſt favourable to the eſtabliſhment, and increaſe of that power on which they depend.

But firm as the connection ſeems to be between the civil and eccleſiaſtical power, a connection cemented by *mutual worldly advantage*, this *high alliance* may yet be broken, and intereſt *divide* what intereſt has *united*. It has often ſeemed good to divine wiſdom to *take the wiſe in their own craftineſs*, and to bring about his own deſigns by the very means that were uſed to defeat them. Of this we have a recent example in France, in which we have ſeen the neceſſities of the ſtate compelling its governors to aboliſh the richeſt of the religious orders. Did not the Engliſh miniſtry, who have not ſo large a *ſtanding army* as the French, want more dependents of other kinds, ſo that *honours*, *penſions*, and *church preferments*, are extremely convenient to them, ſomething ſimilar to this might take place in England: and who can tell what may be the caſe, when ſome future tyrannical adminiſtration ſhall not be able to ride the ſtorm they have raiſed, or to ſtruggle, without unuſual reſources, with the difficulties they ſhall have involved themſelves in.

SECTION

SECTION VI.

Obſervations on ſome incidental matters in the Doctor's ſermon.

THE remainder of the largeſt quotation I lately made from this writer, plainly reſpects the *Methodiſts*, at whoſe conduct he ſeems to have taken great offence. I agree with him, that *miniſters*, while they are employed by public authority, are not at liberty to depart from eſtabliſhed forms; but I can ſee no reaſon in the world why, in a country that admits of toleration, the *people* may not deſert their uſual places of public worſhip, and return to them whenever they pleaſe. Have the laity ſubſcribed to any articles of faith, or formulary of religious worſhip? If not, they are clearly at liberty to act as they ſhall think moſt convenient, and to diſſent partially or totally, ſecretly or openly, as they like beſt. But it is probable, that this author may not mean being at liberty with reſpect to the *laws of this coountry*, but with reſpect to *conſcience*; ſo that though the law allows a man to quit the worſhip of the church of England, either occaſionally or intirely, his conſcience ſhould dictate to him to do it intirely

ly and wholly, if at all, which to me ſounds ſtrange and paradoxical enough.

The ſituation of conſcientious laymen in the church of England, according to the caſuiſtry of Dr. Balguy, is truly remarkable, and ſuch as, I dare ſay, few, or none of them are aware of. If they were, eaſily as the common people are generally led by the prieſts, I think the ſpirit of an *Engliſhman* would revolt at it. For this writer abſolutely declares, that "the union of civil and "eccleſiaſtical powers in the eſtabliſhment is in "vain, if each individual is to retain entire li-"berty of judging and acting for himſelf." Certainly a churchman ought to inſiſt upon receiving ſome very great advantage in the eſtabliſhment, as an equivalent for the ſurrender of his great and important natural right, *to judge and act for himſelf*. Upon the principles of this writer, a profeſſed churchman is not at liberty ſo much as to hear a ſingle ſermon by thoſe who have no legal authority to preach, *i. e. Diſſenters* and *Methodiſts* (or, as he chuſes to call them, *ſectaries*, and *enthuſiaſts*;) ſo that he is cut off from the very means of judging for himſelf: for certainly this writer cannot have leſs objection to his pariſhioners *reading* the diſcourſes of ſectaries and Methodiſts, than to their *hearing* them.

This writer, indeed, is inconſiſtent enough to allow the members of the eſtabliſhed church

to

to make an *open* ſeparation from it, if they cannot *lawfully* comply with the terms of communion. But were the terms ever ſo unlawful, what chance has any perſon for coming at the knowledge of it? Can it be ſuppoſed that a man ſhould at once, of himſelf, and without any means of information, become ſo diſſatisfied with the ſervice of the church, that he ſhould think it unlawful to join in it? I dare ſay the Doctor imagined no ſuch event. But, in point of conſcience, why may not a perſon think himſelf at liberty to leave the communion of the church, though he ſhould not think it *unlawful*. May it not be ſufficient that he thinks another form of religion *preferable* to it?

Take the whole paragraph that I have quoted, and I really think it a curioſity both in point of ſentiment and reaſoning; but, withal, one of the greateſt inſults that I have yet ſeen offered to the underſtandings and ſpirit of men. And yet this is from an Engliſhman, to Engliſhmen.

I am obliged to this writer for the good-will he ſeems to bear the *Diſſenters*, in being an advocate for *toleration* in general; but I cannot help ſaying, I think him a very aukward, and inconſiſtent advocate in the caſe, and that intolerance would be much more agreeable to his

general

general principles. If it be true, as he ſays, p. 17. that "a variety of ſects has a natural tendency both to weaken the influence of public religion, and to give diſturbance to the public peace," how is the magiſtrate "unqualified, or uncommiſſioned, to perſecute for conſcience ſake?" Is he not conſtituted the guardian of the public peace, and muſt he not uſe the moſt effectual means to prevent the diſturbance of it. If, "in order to obtain completely the benefits propoſed from the union of civil and eccleſiaſtical authority, all the members of the ſame common-wealth ſhould be members alſo of the ſame church," a conſcientious civil magiſtrate might think it his duty, and well worth his while, to hazard ſomething, with a proſpect of inſuring ſo great an advantage; eſpecially as, according to this writer, it is only when the union of all the members of the commonwealth in one church is *impracticable* that toleration is neceſſary. I own I ſhould be very ſorry to truſt the civil magiſtrate with Dr. Balguy's general maxims of civil and eccleſiaſtical policy. I would not even truſt Dr. Balguy himſelf in certain circumſtances, when his principles give me ſo uncertain a hold of him. But toleration, very fortunately, happens to be the *faſhionable* doctrine at preſent, and it muſt be incorporated into every ſyſtem, how ill ſoever it may connect with it.

An

An example of one of the miſchiefs attending eſtabliſhments Dr. Balguy has given in himſelf, in the concluſion of this ſermon, in which he reflects very ſeverely upon the author of the *Confeſſional*, and his friends; for I think it is very evident, that his cenſures reſpect nobody elſe. "There is," ſays this writer, p. 20. "one "claſs of men, to whom this plea for compaſſion" (due to Methodiſts, as out of the reach of rational conviction) "will not extend. Thoſe "I mean who, without any pretence to inſpi- "ration, live in open war with the national "church; with that very church of which they "profeſs themſelves miniſters, and whoſe wages "they continue to take, though in actual ſervice "againſt her. Whether this conduct proceed "from a diſlike to all eſtabliſhments, or from "a deſire of erecting a new one, on the ruins "of that which ſubſiſts at preſent, in either "caſe, it is contrary to the moſt evident prin- "ciples of juſtice and honour."

We ſee then, that when a religion has once been eſtabliſhed, all the miniſters of it are to be conſidered as *ſervants in her pay*, and bound to fight for her and ſupport her. The very *propoſal* of a reformation by any member of an eſtabliſhment is contrary to the moſt evident principles of juſtice and honour; a maxim that ſhuts the door againſt all reformations that may not

be called violent ones. Every diſorder, how flagrant ſoever, muſt be winked at, ſo long as a perſon continues in the church; and in order to put himſelf into a ſituation to *propoſe* an amendment, he muſt quit his preferments, and declare war as an alien. This ſufficiently juſtifies the common-complaint againſt eſtabliſhments, that they never reform themſelves, but that all reformations have ever been forced upon them *ab extra*. This has, hitherto, been matter of ſurpriſe to many perſons, and ſome (among whom, I think, is the Biſhop of Glouceſter) have pretended to deny the charge, but now it appears to be rather matter of boaſting; for it would have been contrary to the moſt evident principles of juſtice and honour, for the clergy to have made the attempt.

It is not improbable, but that Dr. Balguy and his friends, if they would explain themſelves freely, might carry this point of honour a little farther, and ſay, that no perſon who has ever *eaten the bread*, or *taſted the ſalt* of the church, ſhould lift up his heel againſt her; nor perhaps the man whoſe father, or grandfather had eaten of it. In this caſe, the hopeful labours of many more perſons, to reform this ſame church, would be deemed baſe and diſhonourable.

I ſhould

I ſhould think the moſt ſcrupulous caſuiſt might allow a clergyman, who is diſſatisfied with the church, to make a fair attempt to procure the reformation of thoſe abuſes that are intolerable to him; and, conſequently, to wait a proper time, to ſee the effect of his endeavours, before he abſolutely quitted his ſtation in the church. For if his endeavours ſucceed, he will have no occaſion to quit it at all, and in the mean time the remonſtrances of a perſon who is a member of the church, may be expected to have a more favourable hearing, than thoſe of one who has no connection with it.

So far am I from joining with Dr. Balguy, in his harſh cenſures of the author of the *Confeſſional*, that I rather think that every princple of juſtice and honour ſhould prompt a man to uſe his beſt endeavours for the benefit of any community of which he is a member, and of whoſe privileges he partakes. If, therefore, there be any thing wrong in the conſtitution of it, thoſe principles require him to promote a reformation of the abuſe; and it would be manifeſtly contrary to the principles of juſtice and honour, to be an unconcerned ſpectator of ſo great a misfortune to it. I cannot help comparing the author of the *Confeſſional*, to a man who would endeavour to ſtop a leak he perceived in the veſſel in which he was embarked, and Dr. Balguy to a man

a man who would run the riſque of its ſinking all at once, rather than inſinuate that there was any thing amiſs with it.

Strange as this author's declamation againſt the friends of the *Confeſſional* is, it follows directly from his avowed principle, that *authority once eſtabliſhed muſt be obeyed.* Speaking of "the "founders of our holy religion," he ſays, p. 18. "They eſtabliſhed a form of church go- "vernment; for the church *muſt* be governed "in *ſome* form, or there could be *no* govern- "ment. But their directions to us are, for the "moſt part, very general. Even their example "muſt be cautiouſly urged, in different times, "and under different circumſtances. In this "one point they are clear and explicit, that au- "thority *once eſtabliſhed* muſt be *obeyed.*"

But was not popery *once eſtabliſhed* in this iſland? How then is it poſſible, upon theſe principles of *paſſive obedience* and *non-reſiſtance*, to vindicate the reformation? Whatever it be that is once eſtabliſhed, and in whatever manner it is once eſtabliſhed, it muſt be ſubmitted to. If this principle be applied without reſtriction, it will vindicate the continuance of every ſyſtem, the moſt abſurd and miſchievous in the world; and if it do admit of reſtriction and limitation, it could

ſignify

ſignify nothing to this author's purpoſe to alledge it.

It might have been expected, that a writer who is ſo extremely ſevere upon thoſe who propoſe a reformation in the church, while they continue in it, ſhould have expreſſed ſome degree of indignation againſt thoſe who intrude themſelves into it by *falſe oaths* and pretences, ſubſcribing the articles and canons, &c. when they diſbelieve and ridicule them. But I fancy that I can put my reader into poſſeſſion of the *ſecret reaſon*, why nothing of this kind occurs in the writings of the friends of church power. Men who have come *this way* into the church have always proved its firmeſt friends. Having made no bones of their own ſcruples, they pay no regard to the ſcruples of others. A conſcientious bigot to the church is not half ſo much to be depended upon, as the man who believes not a ſingle word of the matter, nor is he ſo fit to be admitted into the cabinet council of church-power.

Such, my gentle reader, are the maxims, and ſuch the reaſoning with which this writer ſtands forth to ſupport the declining cauſe of church-authority. For he juſtly complains, p. 5. that "notwithſtanding the members of the church

"of

" of England have, from its foundation, been " carefully inſtructed in theſe points, by its ab- " leſt defenders, yet, ſo capricious is the pub- " lic taſte, that theſe great writers have gradu- " ally fallen into neglect. Their doctrines are " now, in a manner, forgotten, and enthuſiaſts " and ſectaries revive the ſame follies, and de- " fend them by the ſame arguments, which " were once effectually overthrown." In this deplorable ſituation of things, this great champion has judged it " not to be improper to re- " ſume the beaten ſubject, and to explain, on " rational principles, the foundation of church " authority.

It is, indeed, truly deplorable, that theſe *great authors* ſhould have fallen into neglect, and that their excellent doctrines ſhould be, in a manner, forgotten; but this misfortune has been owing, chiefly, to themſelves. The truth is, that theſe great writers have been very inconſiſtent with one another, which is a very unfavourable and ſuſpicious circumſtance for the cauſe they are ſo zealouſly labouring to ſupport. While each of them is buſily purſuing his own ſeparate ſcheme, and they are applying their very different methods to gain the ſame end, they only obſtruct and embarraſs one another.

In

In reality, the principles of the Diſſenters are not more oppoſite, either to thoſe of Hooker or Warburton, than thoſe of theſe two great champions for church-authority are to one another; and other writers have propoſed other ſchemes of church power quite different from them both. Now if three perſons be building a houſe, and one of them will have it of brick, another of ſtone, and the third of wood; and if each be ſo obſtinate, that he will pull down what the others build, how can it be expected that the edifice ſhould be completed? or how can the ſpectators refrain from laughing to ſee them ſo laborioufly employed. If I may be indulged another compariſon, I would ſay, that when the ſchemes of the different writers, in defence of eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, are conſidered together, they make ſuch kind of harmony, as would reſult from a number of perſons ſinging the ſame words, each to his own favourite tune, at the ſame time.

In theſe circumſtances, I cannot help thinking that Dr. Balguy is unreaſonably ſevere upon the members of his own church, and expects too much from them, when he ſays, p. 4. "It "might well have been expected, that the "members of the Engliſh church ſhould have "ſeen farther, and judged better (than to *con-*

" *ſult the ſcriptures for what is not to be found in* " *it*, with reſpect to church government) be- " cauſe this church, even from its foundation, " has been carefully inſtructed on theſe very " points by ſome of its ableſt defenders. But " ſo capricious is the public taſte," &c. Had theſe *ableſt defenders* of the church defended her upon the *ſame principles*, and upon the ſame general maxims of church power, this writer's cenſures might have been juſt; for, by a proper degree of attention and deference to ſuch *inſtructors*, they might have been long ago well grounded in this important branch of knowledge. But he only ſays that *ſome of the ableſt defenders* of the church, not *all* of them have inſtructed her ſo carefully. And were the members of the church ever ſo deſirous of receiving inſtruction, either for their own benefit, or that of their teachers, what proficiency could they be expected to make, when their *ableſt maſters* did not teach the ſame general doctrines?

If this have been the caſe, even from the foundation of this church (which, in proportion to its occaſions, has been bleſt with ſo many able defenders) how much more embarraſſed muſt her members have been ſince the publication of the *Confeſſional*, when (if I be rightly informed, for I have not yet read any of them myſelf) almoſt

moſt every oppugner of that excellent work has adopted a different ſyſtem of church-authority; ſo that, as the controverſy proceeds, we may expect to be entertained with the exhibition of as many crude ſyſtems of church power, as there are ſaid to have been *unformed animals* in Egypt, after an inundation of the Nile. I do not know what we ſhould do after ſuch another inundation, but that theſe half-formed beings generally periſh as ſoon as they have ſhewn any ſigns of life.

Since, however, the ableſt defenders of the church *will*, each, go their own way to work, ſuppoſe that, in order to make the beſt of this unfavourable circumſtance, thoſe who are to be inſtructed by theſe able maſters be diſtributed into *diſtinct claſſes*, and that care be taken, that they do not intermix with one another. Provided the ſame *end* be anſwered, and the church be ſupported, what doth it ſignify how different or inconſiſtent are the means by which it is effected? When this experiment has been made, that mode of inſtruction may be adopted, in excluſion of the reſt, which ſhall be found, in fact, to make the moſt zealous churchmen. In the iſſue, I ſuſpect, that though the *modern improvements* in the ſcience of church government may appear to be the beſt for the politer

and

and more free-thinking part of the nation, nothing will be found to anſwer ſo well with the common people, who do not eaſily enter into refinements, as the old-faſhioned *jure divino* doctrines. I am afraid Dr. Warburton has been rather impolitic in decrying thoſe *old ſupports* of the cauſe, rotten as he thinks them to be. They have been of excellent ſervice in their day.

To conclude with perfect ſerioufneſs. I congratulate my reader, and the age in which we live, that the *great writers* (as Dr. Balguy calls them) in defence of church power, have fallen into neglect, and that their doctrines are, in a manner, forgotten. To account for this remarkable fact, in an age, in which knowledge of all other kinds (and eſpecially the knowledge of *government* and *laws*, and I think the knowledge of *religion* too) has been ſo greatly advanced, may ſurpriſe the Doctor and his friends, and therefore they may reſolve it into *caprice*, or *chance*; but it is no ſurpriſe to me, or my friends. *Magna eſt veritas, &c.* the tranſlation of which ſaying I ſhall give my reader in the words of this author, p. 9. " Truth can never " ſuffer from a free inquiry. The combat may be " ſharp, but ſhe is ſure to conquer in the end." And though the performance I am animadverting

ing upon be an attempt to revive the memory of ſome of the arguments in defence of church-authority, I truſt it will only ſerve to hold them forth once more to the generous contempt and deteſtation of men of ſenſe and reflection; and accelerate their being finally conſigned to everlaſting oblivion, as the diſgrace of human reaſon, and human nature.

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